INTERCEDING FOR THE CHURCH: THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE IN GRIEF AND THE LITURGY

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

THE REV. JUDSON FRICK MERRELL, STS

January 2020

Copyright ©2020 by The Rev. Judson F. Merrell, STS. All Rights Reserved.

CONTENTS

1. *Acknowledgments* *pg. iv*
2. *Abstract* *pg. v*
3. *Chapter 1 The Missing Resource: Grief and the Liturgy* *pg. 1*
4. *Chapter 2 From Baptism to Death* *pg. 14*
5. *Chapter 3 Literature Review* *pg. 50*
6. *Chapter 4 Interceding for the Church: The Spirit at Work* *pg. 68*
7. *Chapter 5 Conclusions* *pg. 104*
8. *Appendix A: Funeral Liturgy and Grief Care Survey* *pg. 115*
9. *Appendix B: Tabulated Results* *pg. 117*
10. *Bibliography* *pg. 119*
11. *Vita* *pg. 123*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to the pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the North American Lutheran Church, Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ, and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod who provided the invaluable data for this project. Thanks to The Rev. Dr. Mary B. Havens for serving as my advisor and The Rev. Dr. Tony Metze for serving as the reader for this thesis. Particular thanks go to colleagues who have provided countless hours of conversation related to the liturgy and grief care: Deacon Ashlyn S. Cox, The Rev. James Blalock, The Rev. Joshua Morgan, The Rev. Dr. Patrick Riddle, The Rev. Steve Saxe, STS, and The Rev. Jeff Shealy, STS. Support from members of the congregation I serve, Grace Lutheran Church in Gilbert, SC, along with my first-call congregation, Springs of Grace Lutheran in Inman, SC has been invaluable. Finally, thanks to my family for all their support: my wife Carrie, my children Addison and Camryn, my parents Franklin and Dawn Merrell, my in-laws Charlie and Nancy Compton, and my two sister-in-laws The Rev. Dr. Christa Compton and Claire Compton. I couldn't have traveled on this journey without you.

ABSTRACT

The Lutheran church is predominantly a liturgical church, with roots that extend to Roman Catholicism. One of the treasures of the church is the funeral liturgy, which provides a God-centered way for individuals, families, and friends to say goodbye to loved ones. The message of the funeral liturgy is one of peace and hope centered in the resurrection of Christ. Many pastors share additional grief resources with families who say goodbye to a loved one through a funeral. For over 50 years *Good Grief* by Granger Westberg has been one of the most utilized resources for those who suffer from grief. While many liturgical and theological books exist within Lutheranism that speaks of the funeral liturgy, there is not one that bridges the gap from the liturgy to experienced grief as outlined by Westberg. Such a resource could be very valuable to pastors, church staff, and parishioners as they seek to work through their grief.

CHAPTER 1

THE MISSING RESOURCE: GRIEF AND THE LITURGY

For many months, James, a pastor, and his wife Carol cared for her mother as she entered into the final stages of her life. They made her a home in one of their guest bedrooms. Their children, although grown and living away from home, became more frequent visitors. Carol's mom continued to decline in health, and soon James and Carol were planning a funeral. Carol decided that she would not cry in front of her children at the funeral. She wanted to be the strong mom that she had always been. Recalling his experience with grief counseling and pastoral care, James told her that one day "the refrigerator door of grief would open." After Carol's mother passed, James and Carol slowly started to return to the life they knew before she had moved in with them. A few weeks later they left town on a planned vacation in Europe. As part of their vacation, they had purchased tickets to a zoo in one of the towns they were visiting. They spent the morning viewing the animals and other attractions and eventually made their way to the bird exhibit where they sat down for a demonstration. After a few minutes James noticed Carol crying. He asked his wife "what is wrong?" Her reply was "I just opened the refrigerator door." Her mother had been very fond of birds. The demonstration brought about memories of her mother. All the emotions that she had bottled up for weeks escaped with a popped cork. The "strong mom" was consumed in her grief as she sat next to her husband watching birds. Grief comes upon people at the most unexpected times.

In March of 1961, The Rev. Granger Westberg preached on the topic of grief at Rockefeller Chapel. His sermon proved to be so popular that he expanded on it and wrote *Good Grief*, which has now been in print for more than 50 years. Westberg's work is a short, concise book that details the various stages of grief, and has become a help for many people since it was first published. To this day, many pastors still recommend this book to those who are suffering from any sort of loss. I first received this book from my own pastor when I was 21 years old. I had recently lost my older brother to a 9-month battle he waged with cancer. This book helped me at the time, and continues to be a comfort every time I read it.

In this sermon turned book, Westberg identified 10 Stages of Grief and offers insight on how those who are grieving can work through the stages. The stages are:

- Stage 1: We are in a State of Shock
- Stage 2: We Express Emotion
- Stage 3: We Feel Depressed and Very Lonely
- Stage 4: We May Experience Physical Symptoms of Distress
- Stage 5: We May Become Panicky
- Stage 6: We Feel a Sense of Guilt about the Loss
- Stage 7: We are Filled with Anger and Resentment
- Stage 8: We Resist Returning
- Stage 9: Gradually Hope Comes Through
- Stage 10: We Struggle to Affirm Reality

For Westberg, grief is not only about death. He is clear that "quite naturally we grieve over the loss of anything important."[1] He also postulates that people grieve in very different ways and that they work through their grief at different speeds. While the church aims to help people who are grieving in any form, the most common form of grief seen in the church is the loss of a loved one. From the time of death until the funeral there are lots of decisions to be made. This involves the funeral home that is assisting the family, the pastor, the church membership, as well as the immediate and perhaps extended family. So much has to happen in so little time that the bereaved may not have the chance to express their grief. It may take days, weeks, or even months until a "refrigerator door" type moment acts as a catalyst. By then, the funeral may be over, family may have returned to their respective homes, and the church has returned to its weekly calendar. However, with the return to normalcy arises a new problem: grief does not stop so suddenly. Therefore, the family may still need help as they process recent events and work through their grief.

There are ways in which the church can help with extended grief. One way is to continue to remember the deceased. One can look at the rubrics of the liturgy to find these various ways, or can turn to the standard practices and traditions within the parish. Places to insert the names of the deceased are included in the "Prayers of Intercession" and in the "Proper Preface" of "The Great Thanksgiving". An example of this inclusion which is found in the *Leaders Desk Edition* of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* is as follows.

1. Westberg 11

> It is indeed right, our duty, and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. By the witness of the saints you show us the hope of our calling, and strengthen us to run the race set before us, that we may delight in your mercy, and rejoice with them in glory. And so, with (_____ *and)* all the saints, with the choirs of angels and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn: [2]

Additionally, many churches celebrate All Saints Sunday/Day in November by remembering all the saints in light, especially those who have died within the past year. However, this is not a universal practice across the church catholic, or even across Lutheranism. Pastors may carry a tradition from one call to the next, or congregations may use its most favorite reason for doing the things the way they do: "that's how we have always done it." Despite the variations the church continues to help those who grieve through its practices and traditions alongside of pastoral care.

While churches and pastors certainly strive to help people cope and work through their grief, there is no common practice. Dr. Tony Everett, former Professor of Pastoral Care at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (LTSS), recommended to his students that a copy of *Good Grief* be given to every family in the church who experienced a death. He expressed to his students the value of this resource in helping the bereaved work through their grief. However, not all pastors studied under him nor did all Lutheran pastors attend LTSS. Within the four largest Lutheran denominations in the United States, there are multiple seminaries that all teach their students differently.

---

2. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Leaders Desk Edition* 193. Several other examples are also included in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and other Lutheran hymnbooks.

Furthermore, due to mergers[3] and curricular changes, one does not even need to attend a Lutheran Seminary to become a Lutheran pastor. There are certain course requirements that have to be fulfilled with regards to Lutheranism, but even these courses are offered at non-Lutheran based seminaries.

This has led to a lack of a consistent curriculum on grief counseling and liturgical worship. While there are many resources available for both, there is not a known resource that links the two. As far as worship material, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) primarily uses *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (*ELW*). The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) uses *Lutheran Service Book* (*LSB*), and the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) uses *Lutheran Book of Worship* (*LBW*). The *Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ* (LCMC) uses a variety of the above mentioned material. The *LBW* was originally developed by the *Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship*, which included the LCMS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and the two predecessors of the ELCA: The Lutheran Church in America and The American Lutheran Church. The roots of the *LSB* and *ELW* can be found in the *LBW*, and its roots can be found in hymnbooks printed prior to its release in 1978. Even then, one can find commonalities within the liturgies and hymnody used by Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches.

The ELCA, through its publisher Augsburg Fortress, has printed and released a variety of books and resources on funerals and the funeral liturgy. The most recent is *In*

3. Several Lutheran seminaries are now merged with each other or universities. One example is the merger between LTSS and Lenoir-Rhyne University that took place several years ago. Another example is the merger between Gettysburg Theological Seminary and Philadelphia Theological Seminary.

Sure and Certain Hope: A Funeral Sourcebook. This is an invaluable resource for pastors and leaders of the church. It begins with a brief history on Christian funeral practices, gives insight into the liturgy, planning and presiding at a funeral, special circumstances, cultural considerations, and finally it ends with three chapters on the church's ministry at the time of death. One of these chapters is *Ongoing Ministry with the Bereaved*. While this chapter is certainly helpful for the reader, the author mainly discusses the brief rite *Comforting the Bereaved* and other liturgical rites such as the *Rite of Healing.* An unfortunate omission is the topic of grief. Along with the ELCA, the LCMS, the LCMC, and the NALC do not publish a known resource that connects our funeral liturgies of the church with grief care, even though they are intricately woven together in the life of the congregation. Such a resource could be helpful not only for pastors and other rostered leaders of the congregation, but could also be a help to families who are struggling with the emotions of grief.

In both the liturgy and grief the church believes the Holy Spirit is active helping us as we work through the loss of a loved one. The church knows and believes this because Jesus said he would not leave his followers abandoned. This is evidenced in John's account of the Gospel.

> [15] "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. [16] And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. [17] This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.[4]

Another example is found in St. Paul's letter to the Galatians.

4. John 14:15-17 All Scripture quoted is from the HarperCollins Study Bible NRSV

[19b]I have been crucified with Christ; [20] and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.[5]

In addition, there are five places in the New Testament where Jesus' eternal presence with the church can be seen, both before and after his death and resurrection. These are found in the three synoptic Gospels.

- [18] And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."[6]

- [20] (Jesus said) "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."[7]

- [31] "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. [32] All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, [33] and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.[34] Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; [35] for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, [36] I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' [37] Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? [38] And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? [39] And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' [40] And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'[8]

---

5. Galatians 2:19b-20

6. Matthew 28:18-20

7. Matthew 18:20

8. Matthew 25:31-40

- [14] When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. [15] He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; [16] for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." [17] Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; [18] for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." [19] Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [20] And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.[9]

- [13] People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them.[14] But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.[15] Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it."[16] And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.[10]

On the basis of the above Scripture, Christians have the promise from Jesus that He will continue to be present with them and that He will send the Spirit to be with them. Therefore it is a faithful belief of Christians that the triune God is active in the worship liturgy. The Spirit's presence is felt in the many facets of the liturgy, primarily through the proclamation and the hearing of the Word. The Spirit is also present in the Eucharist, where the mystery of God is at work changing the bread and wine into the life-giving body and blood of Christ. Not all congregations celebrate the Eucharist on a regular or weekly basis. Despite this, the reading of Scripture and the proclamation of the Scripture through a sermon or homily are common throughout the church catholic.

The Spirit is also active through those who are going through the stages of grief. At all times the Spirit is present with the family. In John 14:26 Jesus promises God the

9. Luke 22:14-20

10. Mark 10:13-16

Father will send the Holy Spirit. The noun used in the Greek language to represent the Holy Spirit is often translated in different ways. But one way in which this word, παράκλητος , can be translated is *Comforter*. Using this common translation the church believes in the Spirit's presence during times of grief. The work of the Spirit here is providing comfort while also carrying the prayers of the bereaved to God the Father. St. Paul writes frequently of the work of the Spirit in the lives of believers. A summation of the Spirit's work can be found in Paul's letter to the Romans. This verse not only speaks to the Spirit's work in the liturgy, but also to the Spirit's work in the lives of those who grieve: "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words."[11]

It has been established that there is not a resource available which links the common Lutheran funeral liturgy (as used in *LBW* and primarily utilized in *ELW*) with *Good Grief*. It has also been established that the Holy Spirit is active both in the liturgies and rites of the church as well as being present with the bereaved as they work through their grief following a loss. Therefore, this thesis-project will establish the connection between the liturgy and grief in a resource that will be available not only to pastors but also to laity. Its purpose is to explain how the liturgy can be a help to those who are working through their grief, based on Westberg's 10 Stages of Grief.

In order to better understand how Lutheran congregations and pastors connect their ministry of pastoral care with grief and the liturgy, input is needed from pastors of the ELCA, LCMS, LCMC and NALC. These four denominations have many similarities

11. Romans 8:26

which can be found in the liturgical and pastoral foundations of the church. Yet at the same time, all four have various seminary requirements and their own polity and policy when it comes to governing the church and serving in the office of pastor. The input for this project was collected via anonymous survey. The purpose of this survey was to answer several questions, which can be grouped together in three areas of focus:

1) Grief resources: Is Westberg's *Good Grief* used as a resource for the bereaved? Are additional resources are used as well?

2) The church's ministry at the time of dying: Are the brief rites such as *Comforting the Bereaved* or *Commendation of the Dying* used? What about other liturgical additions or celebrations such as All Saints Sunday/Day?

3) Grief and the Liturgy: Is a resource needed/wanted?

Additionally, those surveyed were asked to give the name of the seminary they attended and the year they graduated, so as to include a range of pastoral experience and theological knowledge was formulated. A copy of the survey can be found in *Appendix A*.

The compiled data helped determine if such a resource is necessary and/or wanted for use in the church. This data also guided the project to determine how much emphasis should be on the various rites that may be used by the pastor and church at the time of death, such as the brief rites *Commendation of the Dying* and *Comforting the Bereaved*. The data also helped determine what additional practices are used by the church within the Sunday liturgy to remember those who have died and to help those who are working through their grief.

Because there are multiple hymnbooks in use by the ELCA, NALC, LCMC, and LCMS an evaluation of both current and out of print resources is warranted. This

includes, but is not limited to, printed worship materials such as the *Manual on the Liturgy: Lutheran Book of Worship*, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pastoral Care*, and other denominational books. As the Lutheran church shares similarities with Roman Catholicism and other branches of Protestantism, there may be additional resources available that will help bridge the connection of the liturgy, the work of the Holy Spirit, and grief. These additional resources may include, but are not limited to, preaching books, historical narrative books, liturgical books, theology books, and catechism books. All of these are resources which are utilized by the church to help Christians as they grow and mature in their faith. The Spirit guides the faith journey each Christian travels from baptism until death. It is the hope of a Christian that after death they enter into the eternal care of God because of the promises that God has made. This is evidenced by the very definition of faith found in Hebrews 11: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."[12]

The research from the survey alongside the analysis of current and out of print worship materials will determine the flow of the project. This will begin with an in-depth review of the funeral liturgy. The focus will be on the liturgy which is printed in the *LBW* and the *ELW*, as the *LBW* served as a predecessor and guide for printing *ELW*. However, the funeral liturgy presented in the *ELW* is not a carbon copy of the version printed in *LBW*. Any differences seen in the propers, the order of the service or other liturgical options will need to be explored. The title of the resource will be *Interceding*

12. Hebrews 11:1

for the Church: The Spirit at Work. This title captures the Spirit's work not only in the liturgy but also in the lives of believers.

The theological basis for this project will address the foundational nature of the funeral liturgy in baptism. This is the appropriate starting point because we believe that a Christian begins their new life in Christ at baptism. In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus commands his followers to baptize new disciples. Furthermore, St. Paul makes the connection between baptism and death in Romans 6.

> [3] Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. [5] For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.[13]

Using baptism as the starting point will further show what living a new life in Christ looks like to the baptized and how the baptized life is celebrated in the funeral liturgy. Additionally, in the waters of the font Christians are united with Christ by the work of the Spirit to become witnesses and co-ministers of the work that God continues to do in the world and for the world, as reflected by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 12: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."[14]

Finally, an overview of the data collected and its relation to the project will be presented in the final chapter of this thesis. Any outcomes or feedback related to the project will be explored and evaluated. Since this data is driven by such a diverse group of Lutheran pastors, the project will be influenced by and relate to the framework of

---

13. Romans 6:3-5

14. 1 Corinthians 12:7

Lutheran theology and biblical practice in regard to the funeral liturgy as established in the *LBW*. It is important to note any differences which may also be seen since there is such a wide range of backgrounds among those who are surveyed. However, it is the hope of this project that as a whole it will meet the goal of being a useful resource for pastors and laity who serve and worship in Lutheran congregations. While different branches of Lutheranism are represented, the project aims to be a pan-Lutheran resource.

CHAPTER 2
FROM BAPTISM TO DEATH

When people gather at a funeral, they mourn the end of someone's earthly life. The immediate family works through their stages of grief while the Christian community surrounds them with love, support, prayer and celebration. This is not a celebration of the death of the deceased. Instead, Christians celebrate something new in the life of the deceased. This is because the end of someone's earthly life is the completion of their earthly baptismal journey. For Christians, a funeral is a time to celebrate the person's baptism and to see its completion in the death and resurrection of Christ. The basis for this celebration is noted by St. Paul in Romans 6 and is used at the beginning of the funeral liturgy used by many Lutheran churches.

> [3] Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. [5] For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.[1]

As one of the earliest and first theologians of the church, Paul makes a very blatant connection between baptism and death. For Paul, baptism was a lifelong journey, as seen in the above text. From the moment a person is baptized until their death, they are being made a new creation in Christ that is filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit unites the baptized with Christ in the waters of the font. Additionally, in the waters of the font Christians become witnesses and co-ministers of the work which

1. Romans 6:3-5

God continues to do in the world and for the world, as reflected by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 12: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."[2] Paul seems to be informing the members of the Church at Corinth about the gift of the Spirit to them specifically. However, Christians believe the Word of God is a living word that continues to guide, teach, and shape life. Therefore, Paul's proclamation is one with which every Christian can still identify. In his manuscript *The Apostolic Faith: A Catholic and Evangelical Introduction to Christian Theology,* Dr. David Yeago writes "This is the distinctive mode of the Spirit's presence as *gift* with the renewed people of God: the Spirit acts *on* the Church and its members precisely so that he may act *with* them and *through* them to make Christ known in the world."[3] Only at death is this new earthly life in Christ, born in the waters of the font by the work of the Holy Spirit, drawn to a completion. The journey in which the Christian travels from baptism to death is a journey of new life which is guided by the Spirit and supported by an ever- increasing faith in God.

For Lutherans, baptism is a central part of our worship and faith. Eugene Brand and Anita Stauffer note that "no theological tradition is richer in baptismal emphasis than the Lutheran tradition."[4] The Lutheran theological tradition has its roots in the Roman Catholic Church, and especially in correcting what was seen as errors. Many

---

2. 1 Corinthians 12:7

3. Yeago 13:13 *Dr. Yeago is still working on his unpublished manuscript. The copy used was produced with new chapters in 2003, each new chapter having its own page numbering beginning with chapter 9 and ending with chapter 13. The final three chapters, 14-16, returned to the previous page numbering of the entire manuscript.*

4. Brand and Stauffer 5

church fathers, such as Jan Hus, Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe and Girolamo Savonarola, had seen errors in the church and had attempted to correct them. However, the church stifled those corrections through various means, including the Inquisition. Eventually one arose who they could not stop. This reformer's name was The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther whose primary concern and struggle was the medieval doctrine of cooperation, which Luther viewed as compromising the Gospel. One of the symptoms of this doctrine was the church selling indulgences. Despite only wanting to reform the Roman Catholic tradition, Rome's refusal to reform resulted in new traditions including Lutheranism. Having been born out of Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism inherited many of their theological understandings. Luther viewed the church as the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church as confessed in the creeds. Lutheranism's self-identity is to see itself as a continuation of this tradition. Lutheran baptismal emphasis, as noted by The Rev. Dr. Philip Pfatteicher, "began with Luther himself." [5] Luther was dependent upon his own Roman Catholic education, centered in Augustinian theology and the traditions of the early church fathers.

Luther had a passion for the Gospel and was known for his intensive study of scripture. His passion, mixed with 16th century politics and church maneuverings, ignited a storm of debate that broke through the church's protective defenses. He was a passionate debater, professor, and pastor. He was grounded in the theology of St.

5. Pfatteicher, 1990 15

Augustine, who wrote many books and letters on baptism and baptismal theology.[6] For St. Augustine baptism was a sacrament through which God effects salvation. He wrote "The Word comes to the element; and so there is a sacrament, that is, a sort of visible word."[7] The Rev. Dr. Robert Jenson wrote "Augustine's dictum became the sacramental slogan of the Western church."[8] Today, Lutherans are still grounded in the same theology. Many of Luther's works, including the *Small Catechism* and the *Large Catechism* received prominent places within the *Book of Concord*, which contains the confessional documents of the evangelical Lutheran Church. Seminary students are still taught these documents today because Lutheran students are grounded in the Lutheran Confessions. Pastors still use these documents to teach catechism classes. Church Constitutions affirm subscription to the Lutheran Confessions. When the *ELW* was first printed in 2006 by Augsburg Fortress, they chose to include Luther's *Small Catechism* in the hymnbook, a step they had not taken with previous hymnals. These are just a few examples of how the theology of Luther which came to the forefront of the church in the early 1500s is still very much alive and present in modern day Lutheranism.

Following the Roman Catholic tradition, Lutherans see baptism as "the door to life and the kingdom of God."[9] Lutheran theology considers baptism a sacrament. The visible word that Augustine spoke of in regard to the sacraments of the church is

---

6. Two of Augustine's popular works concerning baptism are *On Baptism Against the Donatists* and *A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins and on the Baptism of Infants*

7. Augustine, *In Johannem* 80.3, quoted in Jenson 3

8. Jenson 3

9. The Rites 4

contrasted with the "*invisible* word: God's own knowledge and intention of himself and his works, the inner reality of all that truth which God knows and is."[10] The Rev. Dr. Frank Senn points out the church's tradition of using this language in his book *Introduction to Christian Liturgy*.

> There are not only spoken words of God in the liturgy; there are also the 'visible words' of the sacraments. 'Sacramentum' in Roman usages referred to sacred signs, such as the standards carried by the legions. Augustine of Hippo defined sacrament as a visible sign of an invisible grace. The term sacrament came to be applied to what the Greek church called the saving 'mysteries' of Christ: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. The term grace comes from the Greek charis, which means 'gift'.[11]

Sacraments are therefore viewed as instituted by Christ as a means of grace for the church and by which his word is accomplished in and through visible elements. In and through the rites Christians receive in faith the promise of God's grace which they convey. This grace is a divine gift. Senn notes that the gifts conveyed in the sacraments are "forgiveness of sins, new life, and eternal salvation."[12] The institution of the sacrament of baptism by Christ is recorded at the end of Matthew and is now commonly known as *The Great Commission*:

> [18] And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."[13]

---

10. Jenson 4

11. Senn 15

12. Senn 15

13. Matthew 28:18-20

This is also noted in the *Book of Concord*, particularly in the *Small Catechism*, *Large Catechism*, and Articles IX and XIII of the *Augsburg Confession*.[14]

But what exactly is baptism and why is it so important to the Christian life? The word "Baptism" (Greek βάπτισμα) is usually lexically defined as "ritual washing". Its root word, βάπτω, has a basic meaning of "to plunge" or "to dip". Ferguson notes that "from this most basic sense comes a use that emphasizes the result, 'to wet'."[15] Baptism and its related conjugations appear almost 100 times in the Bible (minus specific mentions of the name *John the Baptist*). All of these occurrences appear in the New Testament. While the word "baptism" is not present in the Old Testament, βάπτω (*baptō*) can be translated the same as the Hebrew טבל (*tabal*), which also means "to dip". This is prominent in the story of the first Passover, where the Hebrew people were "to dip" hyssop in the blood of the slaughtered lamb and to paint the lintel and doorposts of their houses as recorded in Exodus 12. Like the action of baptism, this story from Exodus is a salvific story in which the action (dipping) leads to God's saving the Hebrews from God's plagues against the Egyptians. Other instances of *tabal* in the Old Testament primarily describe the same sort of dipping action. One example can be found in Deuteronomy 33: [24] "And of Asher he said: Most blessed of sons be Asher; may he be the favorite of his brothers, and may he dip his foot in oil."[16] Multiple examples

14. See Kolb and Wengert 43, 47, 359-362, 456-467

15. Ferguson 38

16. Deuteronomy 33:24

can also be found in Leviticus.[17] However, a brief glimpse of the Septuagint finds three instances where the Greek substitutes *baptō* instead of *tabal*. These instances do not use the same meaning, but instead offer variations on "to dip." Leviticus 11:32 offers a "literal meaning", as Everett Ferguson points out in his exhaustive work on baptism in the early church. Ferguson also identifies Psalm 67, which uses a "non-literal sense", and Daniel 5:21, which offers a "harder to classify" representation of "to dip".[18]

The majority of the New Testament references of *baptō* concern the baptism done by John. Robert Jenson addresses this point in the locus entitled *The Means of Grace* for *Christian Dogmatics.* He wrote the "primal church adapted baptism from the practice of John the Baptist."[19] Jenson would develop this idea even more in his work *Visible Words.* Although different from Christian baptism, what John did in the river Jordan was, in itself, a rite. While the word *baptō* can be used in different contexts, "Christian sources maintained the basic meaning of the word."[20] This is especially true in the four gospel accounts. Not only can the action of *baptō* be different; the theological implications can be different as well. It is important to note that even John saw a distinction between the baptism he was doing and the baptism that would come through Jesus. This is noted in all four gospel accounts.

17. See Leviticus 4:6, 4:17, 9:9, 14:6, 14:16, and 14:51

18. Ferguson 38

19. Braaten and Jenson 316

20. Ferguson 59

> [11]"I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."[21]
>
> [8] "I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."[22]
>
> [16] John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. [23]
>
> [32] And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. [33] I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'[24]

Christian baptism is defined differently than the baptism John was doing in the river Jordan. His baptism was for "repentance"[25] and was not done in the name of the Triune God. Christian baptism has an element of repentance, but it is not solely for repentance and is therefore distinct from John's baptism. Christian baptism marks the entry into a life of repentance as a child of God whereas John's baptism was solely for repentance.

St. Paul defines baptism and its relationship with the church in Ephesians 5: "to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word"[26]. This type of washing is still seen today in the current *Rite of Holy Baptism* that is used by Lutherans.

---

21. Matthew 3:11

22. Mark 1:8

23. Luke 3:16

24. John 1:32-33

25. Matthew 3:11

26. Ephesians 5:26

This is a rite that builds up the church for the work of God in the world. Senn notes "the heart of Christian initiation is the water bath called Holy Baptism."[27] In the 16th century, The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther addressed many of the concerns Christians had with baptism. Many of these writings were part of an ongoing debate he had with the Anabaptists.[28] Luther also had writings included in the *Book of Concord*. These two writings of 1529 were revisions of previous instructions in the Christian faith that Luther had included in his *Personal Prayer Book* which was published in 1522. The first of these writings, *The Small Catechism,* was for students. The second, *The Large Catechism,* was for use by those who were teaching the Christian faith. In both of these writings Luther's theology of baptism takes an central role. Luther saw baptism "as the ritual sign of justification by grace through faith and made baptism the basis for the reform of church and society, especially in his doctrine of vocation."[29] He also gravitated toward Ephesians 5 as a basis for his definition of baptism. As for what baptism was specifically, Luther answered this very question in *The Small Catechism*: "Baptism is not simply plain water. Instead it is water enclosed in God's command and connected with God's Word."[30]

Baptism joins individuals to the work of God in the church and the world. Dr. David Yeago writes "baptism is at once the beginning and the *abiding foundation* of the

27. Senn 157

28. See Luther's Works, Vol. 40

29. Senn 161

30. Martin Luther, "The Small Catechism" *The Annotated Luther Vol. 4 – Pastoral Writings 231*

new life of those whose lives are bound together with the Triune God in the Church."[31] Jesus' command in Matthew 28, which gives us the form of the sacrament, mixed with the earthly element of water, is the basis for Christian baptism. It is the "washing" in a ritualistic fashion that makes the person a Christian and joins them to a life with God. Jenson notes "the command is remarkably simple: *to wash."*[32] The Roman Catholic Church teaches that baptism "is the sacrament by which its recipients are incorporated in the Church and are built up together in the Spirit into a house where God lives."[33] This description of baptism serving as a building block for the church is based on Ephesians 2:22. Luther also taught that baptism is a "means of grace" through which God creates something new. Luther viewed baptism as exclusively the work of God since faith was solely the work of God through the Spirit. He taught that Christians are not able to "believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him"[34] except by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is a lifelong journey for the Christian. The ritual action of baptism itself is received only once, but the journey which begins in the waters of the font is important to the whole Christian life. Turning again to Luther's *The Small Catechism*, we see what the Christian receives in faith from God through baptism. He wrote: "(Baptism) brings about the forgiveness of sin, redeems from death and the devil, and

---

31. Yeago 13:24

32. Braaten and Jenson 317

33. The Rites 4

34. See *The Third Article: On Being Made* Holy; Martin Luther, "The Small Catechism" *The Annotated Luther Vol. 4 – Pastoral Writings 225*

gives eternal salvation to all who believe it, as the words and promise of God declare."[35] Luther continues with his explanation by pointing out Jesus' words in Mark 16:16, which sum up the promise that is given through baptism: "The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned."[36]

Even with this Scripture reference Luther was not finished. He continued to explain the significance of baptism as a ritualistic act, distinguishing it from everyday acts of washing. Luther was adamant that water by itself did nothing, arguing that instead it was water mixed with "the Word of God, which is with and alongside the water, and faith, which trusts this Word of God in the water."[37] Luther found support in his answer[38] from St. Paul in his letter to Titus, as evidenced below.

> [4] But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, [5] he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. [6] This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7]so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. [39]

For Luther, and for Lutherans still today, baptism is the ritual washing that makes one a child of God forever. Baptism is an irrevocable autobiographical fact about the person. Through baptism God has accomplished these actions: washing of regeneration; adoption as a child of God; initiation of community; and ordination to the

---

35. Martin Luther, "The Small Catechism" *The Annotated Luther Vol. 4 – Pastoral Writings 231*

36. The Markan text used is part of the longer ending, as so noted in The Harper Collins Study Bible, pg. 1952. The longer ending is missing from the earliest, most reliable Greek manuscripts.

37. Martin Luther, "The Small Catechism" *The Annotated Luther Vol. 4 – Pastoral Writings 231*

38. See Luther's Works Vol. 29 78ff.

39. Titus 3:4-7

priesthood of all believers. Pfatteicher says "baptism thus commits those who are washed by it to a lifelong struggle.[40] Yeago echoes this by writing that baptism has specific features and a specified consequence:

(a) We are to wash them with water

(b) We are to name over them the name of the Triune God – "the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

(c) This is to be the beginning of a process of formation in which the initiate are shaped in the ways of Jesus' people, "taught to obey all that he has commanded us.[41]

The ritualistic washing of baptism unites us to the church catholic as an initiation rite into the Body of Christ. Therefore, this initiation rite for the Christian is also an eschatological rite, in that it unites the newly baptized with Christ, who has gone from death to life. The use of water as an element that God uses to save his people is a continual thread through both the Old and New Testaments. It has already been noted how the words *baptō* and *tabal* are used within the texts. A more comprehensive look at the biblical picture of salvation history reveals stories that share elements with what is known as baptism today, particularly the flood story from Genesis, the exodus from Egypt through the waters of the Red Sea, and the journey of the Hebrew's being led by Joshua through the Jordan River into the Promised Land. In these instances God uses water to destroy as well as to save. Two of these stories are still mentioned today in the

40. Pfatteicher, 1983 15

41. Yeago 13:13

Lutheran Rite of Baptism, as shown in the *LBW, ELW,* and *LSB*. This prayer is known as the "Flood Prayer".

> We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight. Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family, and through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom. At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit. By the baptism of Jesus' death and resurrection you set us free from the power of sin and death and raise us up to live in you.
>
> Pour out your Holy Spirit, the power of your living Word, that those who are washed in the waters of baptism may be given new life. To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.[42]

This prayer serves as a reminder to all those that hear that God has continually made water a sign of his saving action throughout salvation history. Although the prayer used in the ELW differs slightly from LBW, the theological understanding of baptism among the Lutheran Rite still proclaims that the water infused with the Word of God cleanses us from original sin and provides the means by which we are saved as children of God.

Baptism in the church catholic today is done in a specific manner. Following Christ's command in Matthew 28:19, baptism is only done using the Triune Name. Using other wording for the ritual washing, such as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, is not appropriate. These are descriptions of what God is, but using such language is not being obedient to Christ' institution of the sacrament. Yeago points out that such language does not "identify clearly the God into whose hands the candidate is surrendered" and that "when these terms are used as titles by which three divine

42. ELW 230

Persons are *distinguished* from one another, they deny rather than affirm the Church's faith in the Triune God."[43] Therefore, the church uses the language Christ mandated, which is that we baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In baptism the love of the Father is realized in the ministry and biblical history of his Son Jesus Christ and present through the gift of the Holy Spirit in the water and Word.

Use of the Triune name is important for the church beyond the sacrament of Baptism. In baptism, the church visibly professes faith in the Trinitarian Doctrine. The church follows the mandate of Christ, proclaiming that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is in Jesus' life that Christians see the revelation of God. The Son was revealed to the world through Immaculate Conception.[44] In turn Jesus revealed to the world both the Spirit[45] and that He and the Father are one, as recorded in John 17.[46] Yet the church does not profess three gods, but One God. Not only is baptism tied to this doctrine, but the creeds of the church are grounded in this same doctrine. Mutual profession of faith by use of the creeds serves as unification among Christians who belong to different denominations yet proclaim the good news that God exists "in the mutual faithfulness of the Father and the Son in the unity of the Spirit."[47] The Apostle's Creed as used in the Lutheran rite of Holy Baptism is part of the confession of faith. The

43. Yeago 13:14

44. Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 2:1-20

45. John 16:4b-15

46. John 17:1-26

47. Yeago 13:14

rubrics maintain that while the Pastor specifically addresses the candidates, parents, and sponsors for the initial Profession of Faith, the creed is to be said by the entire congregation along with the candidates, parents, and sponsors.

Lutherans believe baptism is a salvific action solely from God. This is seen in *The Augsburg Confession*, Article IX.

> Concerning baptism it is taught that it is necessary, that grace is offered through it, and that one should also baptize children, who through such baptism are entrusted to God and become pleasing to him.
>
> Rejected, therefore, are the Anabaptists who teach that the baptism of children is not right.[48]

Luther expounded on this further in *The Large Catechism:*

> Thus, we must regard baptism and put it to use in such a way that we may draw strength and comfort from it when our sins or conscience oppress us, and say: "But I am baptized! And if I have been baptized, I have the promise that shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body." This is the reason why these two things are done in baptism; the body has water poured over it, because all it can receive is the water, and in addition the Word is spoken so that the soul may receive it. Because the water and the Word together constitute one baptism, both body and soul shall be saved and live forever: the soul through the Word in which it believes, the body because it is united with the soul and apprehends baptism in the only way it can. No great jewel, therefore, can adorn our body and soul than baptism, for through it we become completely holy and blessed, which no other kind of life and no work on earth can acquire.[49]
>
> Baptism is not the pastor's action, the parents' action, or the presenter's action.

Therefore, Lutherans still confess today, along with many Christians throughout the world, the "one baptism for the forgiveness of sins."[50] This means Lutherans recognize the validity in the Spirit's work when a candidate is baptized using the Triune name as

---

48. Kolb and Wengert 42

49. Kolb and Wengert 462

50. See 3rd Article of the *Nicene Creed*

mandated by Christ. What God has already done is holy and cannot be made more holy by redoing it. Further, Lutherans do not invalidate anything that God has already made holy. Persons not baptized using the Triune name are not recognized by Lutherans and many other Christian traditions as having been authentically baptized. Therefore they have not received the gifts associated with baptism and are deprived of any assurance they received. Rather than living a new life in Christ, they have been taught falsely concerning the sacrament. However, they can be acknowledged by the Christian Church as a child of God when they are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As a newly baptized Child of God, the Christian enters into a new phase in their life in which they are formed and shaped in the ways of the life of Christ. However, this comes with a great deal of struggle because of how the world rejects God and His gifts. Luther spoke freely of how active in the world Satan was, especially tempting those who belong to Christ.[51] Newly baptized Christians struggle to receive what God has already poured out upon them in the sacrament because they continue to live in a world where sin abounds. As God's creation is bound by sin, even those who are baptized struggle with the continuation of sin in the new life of the believer.[52] In his lectures on Titus, Luther speaks directly of God's action in baptism.

> (God's) gifts are felt, but one does not feel it when the Holy Spirit Himself is poured out richly. This is mercy, grace, eternal grace, and everything that is in the Holy Spirit; and all these things are without measure and beyond estimation,

51. See John 17:14-16, 25

52. See Heiko Oberman's *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* for an account of Luther's own struggles

> things that are incredible if we do not have the Holy Spirit. Through faith you accept these things.[53]

The struggle to accept God's gifts and to strive to live into the baptismal life may be seen by some as a form of grief. As Westberg said, "quite naturally we grieve over the loss of anything important."[54] While most people relate grief to a loss of something important or a death of a confidant, grief can also occur in our daily life with the simplest of changes. Evaluating grief in this way can lead to experiencing one or more of the 10 Stages of Grief as outlined in *Good Grief.* Westberg says "grief is as natural to every person as breathing."[55] Furthermore, he also states "faith plays a major role in grief of any kind."[56] The struggles Christians confront when they realize the enormity of the gifts that God has bestowed upon them at baptism could very well be related to an inner grief surrounding their newly baptized life and what it means for them. Baptism makes the Christian leave their old self behind and become something new in Christ. This is a difficult change for a Christian, but it leads to something wonderful. Luther touched on this wonderful change in his lectures on Galatians 2:20 with vivid imagery.

> Abiding and living in me, Christ removes and absorbs all the evils that torment and afflict me. This attachment to Him causes me to be liberated from the terror of the Law and of sin, pulled out of my own skin, and transferred into Christ and into His Kingdom, which is a kingdom of grace, righteousness, peace, joy, life, salvation, and eternal glory. Since I am in Him, no evil can harm me.[57]

---

53. Luther 85

54. Westberg 11

55. Westberg 13

56. Westberg 14

57. Luther's Works Vol. 26 167

Luther's struggle with the law was a source of grief for him. But he found blessings in his baptism and the theological implications that Christ and he were joined through the waters of the font. And so Luther's grief with the law changed into a blessing because of the grace granted to him by God in his baptism. Dabo Swinney, the head coach of the Clemson Tigers football team, often talks about how God plays a part in his life. Answering a question about his faith at an ACC Football Kickoff event in Charlotte, NC on July 19, 2018, Swinney responded with the following comments.

> I think that I made a decision when I was 16. I grew up in a family that I was taught there was a God and all that, but I didn't really have a relationship with Christ until I was 16. And that was a game changer for me. That's really become the foundation of my life. It's hard to survive and thrive in this world if you don't have a spiritual foundation and have something that will give you peace, because life is hard. We're all going to experience death and failure and setbacks and disappointments and cancer, and it's just a really difficult world. For me, God is always, and my relationship with Christ, he's given me hope and peace.[58]

The game-changing event Coach Swinney refers to could be his baptism. A tradition within a few denominations is to baptize individuals when they are ready to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior. Although Lutheran baptism has theological differences with this type of baptism, the action of the baptism is the same. The Trinitarian language is still used, and individuals still become a child of God through the work of the Spirit and the water. Lutherans believe that in both cases it is God who is at work calling the individual to the waters of the font.

Coach Swinney grew up knowing that there was a God. In his life changing relationship with God he realized the struggles of a life which is lived with and without

58. https://www.thestate.com/sports/college/acc/clemson-university/article215247055.html Accessed 1/10/2018

God. In his response he details many of these causes of grief in one's life. But he also details the gifts he received, which for him is hope and peace found in his relationship with God. The gifts that he attributes to his relationship to Christ help him overcome any form of grief and are therefore a comfort to him.

All Christians believe like Coach Swinney that they are given gifts at baptism. Lutherans turn to the baptismal liturgy for defining these gifts. Both the *LBW* and *ELW* baptismal liturgies define what these gifts are by naming what God does for the candidate in the waters of the font. The words said are celebratory in nature, but they also provide comfort in the midst of grief. That comfort comes in knowing that through Holy Baptism people are transformed to become Children of God and heirs of God's promises to his children.

LBW:

> In Holy Baptism our gracious heavenly Father liberates us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are born children of a fallen humanity; in the waters of Baptism we are reborn children of God and inheritors of eternal life. As we live with him and with his people, we grow in faith, love, and obedience to the will of God.[59]

ELW:

> In baptism our gracious heavenly Father frees us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are born children of a fallen humanity; by water and the Holy Spirit we are reborn children of God and made members of the church, the body of Christ. Living with Christ and in the communion of saints, we grow in faith, love, and obedience to the will of God.[60]

---

59. LBW 121

60. ELW 227

The *LSB* uses a different introduction to the sacrament, while also offering the comfort of becoming a Child of God and an heir of His promise:

> Dearly Beloved, Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." In the last chapter of Mark our Lord promises, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." And the apostle Peter has written, "Baptism now saves you." Matthew 28:18b-19; Mark 16:16a; 1 Peter 3:21
>
> The Word of God also teaches that we are all conceived and born sinful and are under the power of the devil until Christ claims us as His own. We would be lost forever unless delivered from sin, death, and everlasting condemnation. But the Father of all mercy and grace has sent His Son Jesus Christ, who atoned for the sin of the whole world, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.[61]

The introduction to the baptismal liturgy in all three hymnals is reminiscent of Colossians 1, in which Paul reminds us that God "rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."[62]

One of the gifts of baptism is the forgiveness of sins. Relating baptism with forgiveness of sins is best reflected in Acts 2. There one finds the story of the Holy Spirit coming upon the apostles on the Day of Pentecost. Hearing the apostles speak in different languages, some in the crowd suggest the apostles are drunk. Upon hearing this, St. Peter gives a very famous sermon, which culminates in a call for repentance and baptism.

---

61. LSB 367

62. Colossians 1:13-14

> [38] Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.[63]

It is in this call that the pattern for baptism which the church has always used is found. Also found here is the call language Lutherans still use today. Lutherans proudly state that in the waters of baptism they are called, claimed, and cherished children of God. They believe God calls them to the waters of the font for baptism through his Word and through his church, which is the Body of Christ. Immediately following baptism the newly baptized is marked with the cross on the forehead (through the anointing with oil). The minister then announces to the congregation that the newly baptized has "been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever."[64] This visible sign serves as the reminder of the mysteries and grace of God. From this point onward, the Christian lives into their new life in Christ as a member of the body of Christ, which is the church. An additional visible sign takes place when the congregation welcomes the newly baptized into the body of Christ. A candle (usually lit from the flame of the Paschal Candle that stands at the font) is given to the newly baptized (or parent/sponsor if an infant has been baptized) and the following words are read by a representative of the congregation, immediately followed by the pastor asking the congregation to welcome the newly baptized into the body of Christ.

> **Representative:** Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

---

63. Acts 2:38-39

64. LBW 124

Pastor: Let us welcome the newly baptized.

Congregation: We welcome you into the body of Christ and into the mission we share: join us in giving thanks and praise to God and bearing God's creative and redeeming word to all the world.[65]

This welcome reflects the catholic, or universal, nature of the church and of baptism. In the *Large Catechism*, Luther notes: "we must also know what baptism signifies and why God ordained precisely this sign and external ceremony for the sacrament by which we are first received into the Christian community."[66] The relationship between baptism and Christian community has been an ongoing theme of the church. A major contribution to this theme happened at Vatican II, where a decree from the Roman Catholic Church related the two by stating that "the altar now would face the people, emphasizing that the priest and people are celebrating Mass *together*, highlighting the 'priesthood of the faithful' conferred at baptism."[67] This change helps reflect the baptismal journey of life as a whole.

Living a new life as a Christian is hard. The struggle to live this new life is only compounded by *The Great Commission.* Baptism is not the sole command of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 28. Followers of Jesus are to make new disciples of the church by baptizing and teaching. Lutherans still follow this two-step process. The first step is baptism, which is then followed by a period of teaching, which is called *catechism* or *confirmation*. Confirmation was defined by a 1968 joint study of theology and practice

65. ELW 231

66. Kolb and Wengert 464

67. Moon and Benner 63

represented by the American Lutheran church, the Lutheran Church in America, and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. That definition is that (confirmation is) "a pastoral and educational ministry of the church that is designed to help baptized children identify with the life and mission of the adult Christian community and that is celebrated in a public rite."[68]

For Lutherans, for whom the normative practice is infant baptism, this definition still fits. Yet Lutherans are also increasingly practicing adult baptism as the church sees an increase in previously un-baptized adults joining the church. Therefore adult confirmation is also becoming more prevalent. The South Carolina Synod of the ELCA has used a program developed by Andrew More, Associate in Ministry, as part of their First Call Theological Education (FCTE) classes for new pastors.[69] Catechism, which principally teaches the Creed, 10 Commandments, The Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments, also teaches the baptized about the rich tradition of the church and its head, who is Jesus Christ. For individuals baptized as infants, catechism usually starts around the age of 12. Adults who have been baptized may go through catechism at any time. After the teaching is complete, these individuals then profess their faith through the use of the *Rite of Affirmation of Baptism*. Lutherans, like Roman Catholics, believe "they receive the Holy Spirit at baptism and that the Spirit's presence is reinforced"[70] in confirmation. But they differ on whether confirmation is a sacrament, with Roman

68. Pfatteicher, 1990 71

69. I was privileged to take this class in 2008 as part of FCTE.

70. Moon and Benner 63

Catholics affirming that it is while Lutherans do not. Lutherans see confirmation as an extension of the baptismal rite, which is only completed at death. Nevertheless, both agree on the work of the Spirit in catechism. What the Spirit bestows through confirmation are "gracious gifts"[71] which are both ministries and activities of the Spirit in the life of the Christian. Yeago writes "what the Spirit gives is a mode of activity, in, with, and through which the Spirit himself is at work."[72] It is through these gifts that the work of the Spirit throughout the life of the baptized is seen and realized. "Therefore, the baptismal *gift of the Spirit* is the honor and dignity of participation in the Spirit's own work of witness, as a free child of the one Jesus called 'Father', an heir with the Messiah of the age to come."[73] As a baptized and now confirmed child of God, a Christian goes into the world following the third command in Matthew 28, sharing what they have already been taught and witnessing to the work of God in the world so that other disciples may be made.

The baptismal journey post-confirmation is shown within the promises made by those affirming their faith. In this brief questioning before the gathered assembly, each person promises:

- To live among God's faithful people
- To hear his Word and share in his supper
- To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed

71. Yeago 13:19

72. Yeago 13:19

73. Yeago 13:19

- To serve all people, following the example of our Lord Jesus,
- To strive for justice and peace in all the earth[74]

This is the summation of the Christian life from affirmation of baptism until death. It underscores God's work in and through baptism. In the public affirmation, "God confirms our faith."[75] Through prayer for the Holy Spirit and the laying on of hands, the newly confirmed is prepared to carry out the work which the Holy Spirit has been preparing for them "since baptism and indeed before baptism."[76] How the Spirit is at work in each individual is a matter of faith. While connected, there is a distinction between baptism and faith. One of three arguments Luther made for infant baptism revolved around whether baptism depended on the faith of the one being baptized. Luther, and theologians since, argued that baptism is not dependent upon faith, but rather it is the foundation and sustenance of faith. Yeago notes "faith does not earn or bring about but rather reckons with the love of the Triune God."[77] Similarly, Jenson defines baptism as "the sacrament *of* faith."[78] Following the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1, Christians can confidently say that through faith they can believe the love of God is true and possible. Therefore, baptism is true and possible. Luther noted in *the Large Catechism* that faith "does not make Baptism; rather, it receives Baptism.

---

74. LBW 201

75. Pfatteicher, 1990 75

76. Pfatteicher, 1990 75

77. Yeago 13:26

78. Braaten and Jenson 324, emphasis added

Baptism does not become invalid if it is not properly received or used, as I have said, for it is not bound to our faith but to the word."[79] Yeago also notes that faith and the Spirit come together in the sacraments of the church, of which baptism is one. "Faith and the life in Christ that flows from faith are *altogether* the gift of the Holy Spirit at work in, with, and under the word and the sacraments of the church."[80] Like Luther, Yeago echoes the call that without the Spirit, we are not even able to believe in Christ. It is the Spirit who brings the knowledge of Christ into our midst and opens our eyes to the salvific plan of God which comes through Christ's death, resurrection and ascension.

As the Christian lives out their faith, grounded in their baptism, they follow through to the best of their ability the promises they made during affirmation of baptism. This is because baptism is "initiation into the Church *on earth.*"[81] They live in fellowship with one another, mindful that Christ is a part of every relationship found in the church, as he says in Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." They work to fulfill the calling given to them by God and to live into the new life given to them in baptism. Aside from their vocational calling in the secular world, the Christian is also called to spread the Gospel through their witness and faith. Their witness will be shaped by their faith, which in turn is shaped by the work of the Spirit. This part of their calling is a life-long commitment to those who believe and have entered into this new life in Christ. In the Nicene Creed,

---

79. Martin Luther, "The Large Catechism" *The Annotated Luther Vol. 2 – Word and Faith 397*

80. Yeago 11:31

81. Yeago 13:38

Christians confess the Holy Spirit is "the Lord, the giver of life." This is how we define this relationship, a relationship that leads us to the end of earthly life.

Another part of this *new life,* which is worthy of a chapter in and of itself, is the topic of justification. For his locus included in Braaten and Jenson's *Christian Dogmatics,* Gerhard O. Forde wrote "the death of the old and the resurrection of the new, but the word of justification in proclamation and sacrament, are the basis of the Christian life."[82] Justification by grace through faith alone has become a banner of Lutheranism, harkening back to Martin Luther's reformation era work, particularly in his lectures on Romans. In these lectures we see the beginnings of his use of the Latin phrase *simul iustus et peccator* (simultaneously justified and sinner). Justification is still a popular theological argument among scholars in the church today. However, there is no questioning its ties to baptismal theology and how the Spirit continues to be at work in the *new life* that the Christian lives following baptism until death.[83]

At death, the church celebrates the completion of the new life in Christ for the deceased, that is, the fulfillment of baptism. Hans Schwarz, writing on *Eschatology*, asserted that "death is the border of this life."[84] This is specifically referencing the earthly life. Even though it may seem death has the "victory over life"[85], this is not the case. Christians do not view death as the end. "In the face of death, the church

---

82. Braaten and Jenson 399

83. See Braaten and Jenson Vol. 2 for Forde's complete locus on Justification and the Christian Life

84. Braaten and Jenson 560

85. Smith 11

confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by his death and resurrection, has broken the chains of sin and death that bound humanity."[86] The church celebrates the paschal mystery of Jesus' journey from death to life, which is the opposite of the journey of humanity. Lutherans, along with Roman Catholics, believe Christians are joined to this mystery in the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion. This is reflected in the words of St. Paul as he wrote to the church at Rome.

> [3] Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. [5] For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. [87]

The work of God through the church at the time of death is extremely important. "The work of Christians at the time of death is to offer the witness of this confident paschal faith."[88] The funeral liturgy is a Spirit-filled time in which the church "intercedes on behalf of the deceased because of its confident belief that death is not the end nor does it break the bonds forged in life."[89] The new life, or life of faith, began in the waters of baptism. It was strengthened through confirmation and then nourished at the Eucharistic table. As the end of this new earthly life draws near, the church continues to provide care prior to death and the funeral service. This service is to be done "when it is

---

86. The Rites 924

87. Romans 6:3-5

88. Smith 11

89. The Rites 925

determined that an individual is irreversibly dying."[90] This care has many names such as *Last Rites, Extreme Unction & Viaticum, Christian Initiation for the Dying,* and *Commendation of the Dying.* Variations among the prayers and order of the Rite exist, as well. These services begin to prepare the dying and the family for what is going to happen. They provide a time of reflection on the baptismal life. They also provide consolation leading up to the funeral, which is a service of worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the "gift of a life which has now been returned to God, the author of life and the hope of the just."[91] Christians believe The Spirit is ever present in the liturgy, interceding to God on behalf of the church. In Romans 8, St. Paul reminds the church of the Spirit's actions in the liturgy. "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words."[92]

While the world may view death as the end of life, the Christian believes the work of the Spirit does not end with death. Christians believe in God's salvific plan for all creation. This is the completion of communion between human beings and God. Yeago notes "the true marvel of the life-giving work of the Spirit"[93] is that Christians are not left at death as mere objects of a divine act, but instead they are lifted "to share *as created subjects* in the uncreated *mutuality, the eternal reciprocity*, of love between

90. Anderson and Foley 109

91. The Rites 925

92. Romans 8:26

93. Yeago 11:29

Father and Son."[94] It should be noted though that this mutuality is not an act of which Christians are capable of achieving. Christians are simply the receivers and agents of God's work through the Spirit. Like baptism, when Christians are called and claimed by God, salvation is an act of faith accomplished by the power of God. "Thus faith – and likewise the love which flows from it – is at the same time our own and a gift, involving acts, mind, and will of which we are genuinely the subjects and yet at the same time bestowed on us freely and graciously by the Spirit, the Lord and Life-giver."[95]

The funeral liturgy itself is filled with baptismal imagery as the church celebrates the fulfillment of baptism that comes with death. At the beginning of the liturgy, the coffin is covered with a pall. The color of the pall is usually white; reminding the family of how the newly baptized is often clothed in white garments following baptism. If "the death and resurrection of Christ are the image of God's loving being, so our baptism can be the image of Christ's death and resurrection."[96] This is visible in the death of a Christian, especially as the Spirit continues to walk with the family and loved ones of the deceased. The Christian's belief and trust in the Spirit's continued work is a matter of faith, which is defined in Hebrews 11:1. As the pall is being placed on the casket, we hear as well as see the baptismal connections, as the words of St. Paul from Romans 6 are read.

> [3] Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism

94. Yeago 11:29

95. Yeago 11:29

96. Braaten and Jenson 323

into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. [5] For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.[97]

In writing a locus on *Eschatology* for Braaten and Jenson's *Christian Dogmatics*, Hans Schwarz notes that this understanding of baptism makes death "beneficial for Christians."[98] Schwarz reminds his readers that Christians die in sin, and rise to a new life in Christ. A further look at Schwarz's chapter shows that in regard to Paul and his theology of death "the Pauline imperatives indicate that this 'baptismal death' only initiates the process of dying, it never comes to an end in this life."[99] Therefore, resurrection, the very path which Jesus has already trod, is a matter of eschatology. In *The Small Catechism*, Luther wrote "the old creature in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance and, on the other hand, that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever."[100] This daily death Luther speaks of is the struggle to be the Christian God has called us to be. It reaches toward the eschatological fulfillment that comes from God while showing itself in the daily life of the Christian. "Death, therefore, is the precondition for new life and the other side of the resurrection."[101] Kierkegaard also touched on this notion in his work *The Sickness unto Death*. He wrote "Christianly

97. Romans 6:3-5

98. Braaten and Jenson 562

99. Braaten and Jenson 563

100. Martin Luther, "The Small Catechism" *The Annotated Luther Vol. 4 – Pastoral Writings 232*

101. Braaten and Jenson 563

understood, death itself is a passing into life. Thus from a Christian point of view, no earthly, physical sickness is the sickness unto death, for death is indeed the end of the sickness, but death is not the end."[102]

It is only natural for the loved one(s) of the deceased to grieve at death. The Bible records the disciples grieving at the death of Jesus.[103] Other examples of grief are shown in the story of Lazarus' death from John, particularly from Thomas as well as from Martha.

> [14] Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. [15] For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." [16] Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." [17] When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. [18] Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, [19] and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. [20] When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. [21] Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. [22] But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him."[104]

The disciples, as well as Martha, probably experienced the same stages of grief (as outlined by Westberg) that Christians still experience today. The funeral service itself helps the bereaved make their journey through those stages. However, those who grieve can be "often put off by the sadness of remembering."[105] To be "put off" means to rid oneself of something. Anderson and Foley use this wording to explain that the sadness of remembering can make people ignore the stages of grief and act as though

---

102. Hong and Hong 354

103. John 14:1-13; 16:16-33

104. John 11:14-22

105. Anderson and Foley 100

nothing is wrong, when in fact something is very much wrong. Therefore it is up to the Christian community to surround those who grieve and offer a support system that cannot be rivaled in its love and care. Margaret Smith elegantly sums this up in her book *Facing Death Together: Parish Funerals*.

> As the Christian community reaches out in care and consolation, those who mourn the loss of a loved one know that in their grief they are supported by a believing community, that they can bring their grief and tears to a safe place to confront the depth of their own need of God's presence.[106]

The church trusts in the promises made in the waters of the font and commends the deceased into the eternal care of God while also committing their body or remains to its final resting place. This is just part one of the two-fold ministry of the church at death. Besides caring for the deceased through proclaiming the baptismal promises of rising to new life, the church also cares for those who grieve. Grief is often visibly seen in the faces of those in attendance, as they also wrestle with a new future. They "must continue their baptismal journey without the one they love."[107] The church assumes a new role for them as it helps them to cope with their grief and live into this new journey. This is a journey filled with hope, trust, and holiness. Brothers and sisters in Christ may offer encouragement, assurance of the promise of resurrection, and help with the coping of grief. This is the beauty and the strength of the church when something tragic happens. The community of faith "helps those who grieve to trust that

106. Smith 11ff

107. Bushkofsky and Satterlee 151

God will raise them to new life in this world as surely as God will raise their loved one to new life in the world to come."[108]

The *Rite of Holy Communion* of the *ELW* hymnal includes the following as part of the Eucharistic prayer for the season of Easter.

> With this bread and cup we remember our Lord's Passover from death to life, as we proclaim the mystery of faith: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.[109]

In the funeral liturgy, Lutheran Christians proclaim the same: that Christ has died, that Christ is risen, and that Christ will come again. This is his journey from death to life. "For Jesus and for us, the end of life is a new beginning in the memory of God and in the memory of those we loved and who loved us."[110] This new beginning is the journey. Christians can look to John 14 for this journey, in which Jesus "consoles his disciples by a promise to return to take them to himself so that they may be with him."[111] It is in this same chapter of John's account of the Gospel where an additional promise is found.

> [15] If you love me, you will keep my commandments. [16] And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. [17] This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.[112]

---

108. Bushkofsky and Satterlee 151

109. ELW 111

110. Anderson and Foley 100

111. Brown 353

112. John 14:15-17

As the Christian faces the end of life, they do not do so by themselves. As the Spirit has been promised, the Christian therefore knows the Spirit walks with them all the way to the end of their earthly life. Chapter 14 of John's account gives us a good picture of "how the Spirit (14:15-17), Jesus (14:18-22), and the Father (14:23-24) will all dwell in the Christian."[113] The Spirit walks with the Christian from baptism until death. Jesus, the Son of God who has already gone on the path from death to life, brings the Christian to the place that has been prepared. This journey from earthly death to everlasting life therefore restores the perfect relationship between God the creator and human creation that was broken by original sin. All this is made possible by faith in Christ. Writing about Dr. Martin Luther's end of life, Heiko A. Oberman writes "Luther must have had a very strong constitution, or he would never have been able to bear strain, overwork, and constant physical ailments for so long."[114] This was a reference to the many physical issues Luther had throughout his journey as a theologian of the church and his struggle with God and the devil. Oberman goes on to say that "according to the medieval *memento mori*, in the midst of life we are surrounded by death."[115] But Luther's faith in Christ turned this phrase upside down, just as Luther's theology had turned the church upside down. The new phrase became "in the midst of death we are

113. Brown 353

114. Oberman 330

115. Oberman 330

surrounded by life."[116] This can be summarized by saying that Christians grieve with hope for the new life in Christ that is to come.

Christians today still hold fast that life does not end at death, but continues into the eternal care of God. This is made possible solely by faith Christ overcoming death and the grave as the Gospels witness. In the *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, fellow reformer Phillip Melanchthon wrote: "For just as the wrath of God is conquered by faith in Christ, so also death is conquered by faith in Christ."[117] Christians are given this faith by the very Spirit, who walks with us through the baptismal journey of life, until, along with St. Paul and all the Saints in Light, we cry out: [57] "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."[118]

116. Oberman 330

117. Kolb and Wengert 212

118. 1 Corinthians 15:57

CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW

Persons who are grieving can find many resources that may help them cope with a loss in their life. One of the most well-known resources is *Good Grief* by Granger Westberg. Westberg was a pioneer in helping people work through what he called the 10 Stages of Grief. The back cover of this resource has a headline at the top that reads, "Timeless wisdom for all who grieve." Perhaps this heading should be worded a little differently: "Timeless wisdom for all *as they* grieve." Reading through Westberg's book reminds the reader that at some point, everyone grieves. This grief is present whether it is the loss of a job, a family member, a pet, or any other event that causes a wrinkle in the daily pattern of life. Westberg makes it clear that the stages of grief can be worked through at various times and that working through grief can be very helpful to the healing process. While Westberg doesn't specifically quote scripture, he writes with faith as a central element that helps those who grieve. As Westberg shows how each stage builds on the previous one(s), he also shows the emphasis of building one's faith. Perhaps this is why his book has become a timeless resource, having been in print for over 50 years, and is still a recommended resource today.

Good Grief has proved to be so popular that Augsburg Fortress now offers two additional sister resources. *The Good Grief Journal: A Journey Towards Healing* and *The Good Grief Devotional: 52 Weeks Towards Hope* provide additional resources for those experiencing grief. The journal provides 10 different meditations based on Westberg's 10 Stages of Grief. Each meditation offers questions, reflections, scripture passages,

and other helpful suggestions to the person experiencing grief. The devotional is written from a pastoral care perspective in order to help the reader move towards hope, just as Westberg did in his book. Both books are meant to be used in conjunction with *Good Grief*.

Another grief resource that has been available for many years is *A Time to Mourn, a Time to Dance: Help for the Losses in Life* by Margaret Metzgar. Originally printed by a Lutheran Insurance Company, Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL), it has now been supplemented and updated by Thrivent Financial, which was born out of the merger of AAL and Lutheran Brotherhood. While it maintains a very biblical foundation, this book briefly touches on many aspects of life that can cause grief. In a way, it mirrors some of the work done by Westberg. While not addressing every situation in life which causes grief or loss, Metzgar addresses the most common. Furthermore, she includes a section about how to help others in their grief, whether they are an adult or a child. The final section of the book includes a detailed list of national support resources and references, alongside selected Bible readings and a worksheet on the personal circle of support. Coupled with Westberg's *Good Grief*, one can find not only an understanding of how grief affects the human life; it also offers guidance in how to cope and work through grief. Both are still used in Lutheran congregations as grief resources.

Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross authored or co-authored several books on the subjects of death and grief. Along with David Kessler, she authored one book on grief that recognized 5 stages of loss. This book, *On Grief and Grieving – Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss,* is not a brief work like *Good Grief.* Instead,

Kübler-Ross and Kessler explore grief through their own experiences and case studies. They offer a spiritual side to their own insights, but they only recognize five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Their end goal for their work was to highlight how one's own experience, along-side spiritual insight, explains the unique grieving experience that everyone experiences and lives with following a loss.

In the mid 1970's, several Lutheran denominations came together to form a worship resource that sought to normalize Lutheran worship theology and liturgy. This resource was called the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (*LBW*) and was first printed in 1978. Alongside this new hymnbook, the publisher (Augsburg Fortress) printed a comprehensive package of liturgical resources. This included the *Ministers Desk Edition*, the *Manual on the Liturgy*, *Occasional Services*, *Commentary on the Occasional Services*, and *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship*. Together, these books gave pastors and rostered leaders of the church an in-depth record of Lutheran and Christian history, theological perspectives, and liturgical resources. Eventually these books were supplemented with additional resources, such as the *With One Voice* (*WOV*) hymnal that was printed in 1995.

Many of these books were authored or co-authored by The Rev. Dr. Phillip Pfatteicher. For Lutheranism, his works became and have remained the definitive resources for liturgy and its theological implementations. He provides the historical backgrounds as well as the connections between Lutheranism and various other church bodies. Like Lutheranism, his liturgical and theological writings are grounded in Roman

Catholicism while still honoring the work of Martin Luther and the other reformers. The *Manual on the Liturgy*, co-authored by Pfatteicher and Carlos R. Messerli, are still sought after by Lutheran Pastors today. Augsburg Fortress has only recently started reprinting this book and the vast treasure trove of information that it holds. There is not a more complete liturgical resource available for Lutherans today.

A theme throughout the liturgical services and theological perspective of the *LBW* and accompanying resources is the emphasis on the Christian's living a life grounded in baptism. The *LBW* is heavily sacramental, offering three liturgical settings for Holy Communion. The companion *WOV* offers three more liturgical settings. Furthermore, the *LBW* offers the option of communion within the liturgies for major life passages such as the liturgy for Holy Matrimony and the funeral liturgy, often called Burial of the Dead. Within these liturgies are also theological connections to baptism, as seen especially in the funeral liturgy. However, what is missing in these liturgies is a connection to grief, which most often is associated with funerals, but can be associated with any life-changing event, as reflected on by Westberg.

In 2006, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) printed a new hymnal titled *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (*ELW*). The *ELW* is a combination of several hymnals, with the *LBW* being the most influential. Many of the liturgies and liturgical music found in *ELW* have their roots in the *LBW*. However, the resources that were printed alongside the *ELW* are not as comprehensive as the resources printed with *LBW*. Similar to *Ministers Desk Edition* of the *LBW*, Augsburg Fortress printed a *Leaders Desk Edition* for the *ELW* hymnal; but a similar *Manual on the Liturgy* resource was not

compiled. Instead, several smaller resources have been authored. These smaller resources focus more on a single topic rather than a comprehensive single volume book. Examples of this are *Renewing Worship: Holy Communion and Related Rites* and *The Christian Life: Baptism and Life Passages* (Volume 2 in the *Using Evangelical Lutheran Worship* series). While these resources are certainly useful for pastors and rostered leaders in the church, they are not as concise as the *LBW* resources. Because there are more individual books and resources, the *ELW* and related materials are also not as user-friendly. Furthermore, these resources have become expensive add-ons for pastors and church leaders who are already seasoned in their use of the *LBW* resources. As the church has transitioned to offering more of its publishing via digital format (Such as *Sundays and Seasons*), the cost of its physical book resources has gone up. This may prove to be a hindrance to leaders who still prefer a book format over a digital format. The digital format of these resources does bring several strengths, such as a quicker search through all the materials, but it negates the bookmarks and highlighting that some people prefer with printed materials.

Like Lutheranism, the Roman Catholic Church has numerous liturgical and theological resources. *The Rites Volume 1* is the published resource that was revised at the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and approved for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America. This volume includes all the Rites of the Catholic Church that are used outside Mass. It begins with Christian Initiation and ends with the Order for Christian Funerals. Like the Lutheran theology seen in the *LBW*, *The Rites* is rooted in baptism. This is witnessed throughout the entire volume. The theology of baptism is a

commonality between the *LBW* and *The Rites* which speaks to the roots of the church catholic.

The Rites is often referenced in other books that focus on Roman Catholicism. *The Death of a Christian: The Order of Christian Funerals*, *Facing Death Together: Parish Funerals*, and *Catholic Christianity* all freely quote and use *The Rites* as a resource. All three of these books lift up the purity and beauty of the liturgical funeral service. If these three books, along with *The Rites,* were compared to the Lutheran funeral liturgy and accompanying historical and theological writings (such as *The Manual on the Liturgy)*, many similarities would be found. While Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism do not agree on everything, the roots of Lutheranism being found in Roman Catholicism are still very evident today, especially in the pastoral care of those who grieve the loss of a loved one and in our liturgical services.

Facing Death Together: Parish Funerals and *The Death of a Christian: The Order of Christian Funerals* both includes sections on ministering to those who grieve. Of the two, *Facing Death Together* provides a broader approach. The author, Margaret Smith, makes it clear that death is a public event. She outlines how the church as a whole helps those who grieve. By not focusing on the liturgical service only, Smith gives more insight for how the laity can help the pastor in caring for those who grieve. Her book has similarities to the message of Westberg's book on grief, while expressing her faith tradition in a more obvious manner. She could easily add his work to her chapter on death and grief.

Augsburg Fortress has recently printed a book which moves toward linking grief specifically with funerals. That book, *In Sure and Certain Hope: A Funeral Sourcebook*, is a 280-page volume based on the funeral liturgy as presented in *ELW*. It covers many of the aspects that pastors are involved in when it comes to funerals. This includes planning and presiding at a funeral, cultural aspects, preaching, special circumstances, and even the ongoing ministry of the church to the bereaved. It also includes planning sheets which leaders in the church may use if members wish to plan their own funeral. However, this book is only a year old, and while it provides more than previously-printed resources, it too leaves off a connection between the stages of grief as outlined by Westberg and how those stages are represented in our liturgy.

As the ELCA celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, its publishing house (Augsburg Fortress) published a new series of books regarding the writings of Martin Luther and his co-reformers. This series, called *The Annotated Luther*, is a 6-volume set that organizes Luther's writings based on subject. The set includes all the confessional documents of the Lutheran Church, which are compiled separately in *The Book of Concord*. It also includes selected sermons, writings on the Christian life, detailed notes on Luther's more well-known writings, the 95 Theses, and many more. Through these books, the reader can see the theological struggles which Luther had with the Roman Catholic Church. These books do not, however, give a complete look at his theology. What they do give is an insight into some of his writings and sermons. The struggle which Luther had with what he perceived as the sin of the Roman Catholic Church is easily seen, as well as his journey through trying to reform the church as he

knew it. The reader can also see how Luther worked with other reformers, such as Philip Melanchthon, local political leaders, fellow pastors and teachers.

Luther – Man between God and the Devil by Heiko A. Oberman has been hailed by some as the foremost biography of Luther to date. In this book, Oberman presents a Luther that is very personal to the reader. Luther was fond of blaming the devil for his struggles, and Oberman keeps this theme front and center while also giving an intimate view into Luther's continued theological growth and political struggles. This book, combined with Luther's own writings, gives a detailed understanding of who Luther was and how he fought for the church that he loved.

The *Luther's Works* series gives a more comprehensive and exhaustive insight into his work. This 55-volume set compiles lectures, sermons, devotional writings, letters, and even his table talk discussions. Through this set, readers can better understand how brilliant Luther was with his teaching, understanding, and daily wrestling with Scripture. As a pastor and teacher, Luther worked to educate not only his students but his parishioners also. While theologically heavy and often very long-winded, his sermons covered topics that even his parishioners could understand. As a linguist, Luther translated the Latin Vulgate into his native German so the very people with whom he interacted would be able to read and study the Word of God. With the publication of this series, non-German speaking pastors and laity can read in Luther's own words his theological instruction, struggles, and insights. *Luther's Works* is still used as source material. Especially relevant are the devotional writings and letters of Luther.[1]

1. See *Luther's Works Vol. 42, 43, 48, 49, 50*

The recent *In Sure and Certain Hope: A Funeral Sourcebook* references this series multiple times.

A book which has become a popular guide for funeral-planning is *Accompany Them with Singing: The Christian Funeral* by Thomas G. Long. Long makes compelling arguments that like Lutheranism and Catholicism, the roots of the Christian funeral are in baptism. At death, the deceased continue their baptismal journey in the fullness of sainthood, all the while being accompanied by the prayers of the church. This journey is grounded in the faith that Christ rose from the dead so that we too may follow on his path to living with God.

Long's book is divided into two sections. Part One includes background information on the historical nature of funerals. This includes human rituals, Christian practices, and even a section on worship as drama. The second part of his book speaks to the ministry of the church at the time of death. This includes the ministry of the church at the hour of death, planning a funeral, and even preaching at a funeral. Long references both the Roman Catholic rite as well as Lutheran liturgies such as the *Burial of the Dead* which is included in the *ELW* and the *LBW*. However, Long also makes it clear that his book is ecumenical in nature, and therefore includes references to the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* (1979), the Presbyterian *Book of Common Worship* (1993), and funeral material that is used in the *Eastern Orthodox Rite for Laypeople* (1998). In doing so, Long validates his argument that the church can find commonality in funerals, especially if baptism is seen as the root.

The beauty of Long's book is his extensive chapters on how to plan and preside over a funeral, including preaching at the funeral. While it is easy to read liturgical rubrics in a hymnal, those rubrics only instruct the presider about the individual parts of the order of the service. Long breaks down the liturgical service and shows the importance of each part, including the emotion that may accompany each part. In this second section of his book, the reader can find extensive funeral planning information, including collects and prayers of intercession, as well as musical recommendations, information about cremation, open vs. closed caskets, and graveside service recommendations. Long also spends an entire chapter on funeral preaching. He gives eight objectives of a good funeral sermon, which the preacher should try to acheive. Finally, in his appendix, he writes a section about difficult funerals which pastors may experience at some point in their pastoral tenure, such as suicide, people outside the faith, and for children.

While making his case for the involvement of the church in a funeral, Long references several well-known theologians. This list includes many of the early church fathers, such as Tertullian, St. Augustine, and John Chrysostom. Long also uses the material of more modern-day theologians, such as N.T. Wright and Karl Barth. His use of this great witness of theologians brings the ancient traditions of the past into the modern-day church. Alongside this, he gently admonishes the church of post-modernity to return and reclaim the funeral practices of the faithful saints who have already fought the good fight.

Two additional books that cover the topic of funeral preaching are *Preaching for Special Services* by Scott Gibson and *How to Make Homilies Better, Briefer, and Bolder: Tips from a Master Homilist* by Alfred McBride, O. Praem. These two authors approach funeral sermons from different perspectives, yet both argue that Christ crucified is a central key to any funeral sermon. Their difference is in regard to the appropriateness of a eulogy within the service. As a Roman Catholic, McBride argues against it, while Gibson argues that it has been a part of tradition long enough to warrant its inclusion. Gibson follows Haddon Robinson's "Big Idea" approach to funeral sermons, while also recommending they be brief. This approach doesn't always work within Lutheranism though. Lutherans, like Roman Catholics, are sacramental in their approach to preaching. The Lutheran funeral liturgy is filled with references to baptism, and celebrating the Eucharist is an option within the liturgy as well. Therefore, the idea of the sermon may be based around the victory of Christ over the grave through his death and resurrection and not focused on a single text with a single idea and complement. Preaching sacramentally references God's work in the waters of the font as well as in the bread and wine of the table.

While not specifically using Long's *Accompany them with Singing*, Gibson does use additional funeral-based writings of Long as a reference. Gibson agrees with Long that a funeral is primarily a worship service to God by the church. In this service, the church provides a suitable structure and language is helpful to those who are mourning. Therefore, the theology of the sermon is of extreme importance. Gibson argues that preaching in general is evangelistic and perhaps that it is a direction which the preacher

can use in crafting a sermon. McBride focuses on the preacher's offering compassion for the mourners by the use of stories, biblical witness, the catechism, and the life of a Christian that is grounded in baptism. Like Gibson, he argues for a brief message such as a homily instead of a full sermon. The recommendations from both can be helpful and certainly can be tailored to the Christian tradition of the deceased.

Long, Gibson, and McBride all offer brief glimpses into how the sermon plays a part in the funeral liturgy. Unlike Gibson and McBride, who focus on preaching, Long looks at the entire liturgy and argues that the service itself is a reflection of the theology of the church as a whole. This is also seen in *Catholic Christianity* by Peter J. Kreeft. In this Roman Catholic resource, Kreeft gives a theological background of the Roman Catholic theology concerning the Resurrection of the Body (Part II Chapter 9) and Life Everlasting (Part II Chapter 10). His chapter on the liturgy (Part III Chapter 1) introduces the major aspects of the liturgy and how it is formed biblically and theologically. He specifically outlines the work of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy, using the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1692) as his foundational resource.

To get a fuller understanding of liturgy, one needs to read Frank Senn's *Introduction to Christian Liturgy*. A past president of both the Liturgical Conference and the North American Academy of Liturgy, Senn is widely known for his deep understanding of how the liturgy of the church was formed and is practiced. Although Senn is Lutheran, his introductory work explores the worship, history, traditions, and liturgical practices of Roman Catholic, Protestant, Western and Eastern Christianity. Senn uses the work of Pfatteicher as well as other well-known theologians when he

covers funerals in his section on *Life Passages*. He also uses baptism as the foundational life passage event on which everything else is built. Senn calls this the "paschal theme" that is to be emphasized throughout the service. He also notes the influence of the Roman Catholic Rite of Christian Funerals as witnessed in many Protestant funeral liturgies, especially Lutheran and Episcopal.

Worship and Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine by Don E. Saliers lifts up some of the same liturgical facets that Senn does. Saliers compares the differences of liturgical/sacramental worship styles with that of evangelical/free-church styles. He heavily emphasizes how our worship is itself an expression of how God's will is done here on earth as in heaven. Throughout the book, Saliers focuses on the acts of worship: how the church praises God through prayer, singing, invoking, thanking, proclaiming, confessing, interceding, and blessing. While Senn gives more of a complete liturgical picture, Saliers makes the argument that Christian worship and liturgy is an art form based on eschatology, where the church continues in its traditions until the day of Jesus' return. This is the thesis of his argument and theology, that in worship the human context meets with the Glory of God, thereby leading worship to be theological and anthropological. This book is not a definitive argument on the liturgy, worship, or theology. However, Saliers' argument is thought-provoking and at the least allows for an introduction to deeper study.

Deeper study into the funeral liturgy and the theology of death can be found in the works of popular theologians. An example of someone who did struggle with this topic is Søren Kierkegaard. In *The Essential Kierkegaard*, one can find Kierkegaard's

famed *The Sickness unto Death*. This pseudonymous work gives the reader a look at the complex theology of death and the human being. Kierkegaard weaves his way through the human experience of sickness, despair, and death, all the while framing it within the Christian point of view and understanding. Although Kierkegaard is not always easy to understand, his theology is instrumental still today in relating sin, faith in God, one's humanity, and death.

An additional book which weaves together theology with anthropology is *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and Divine* by Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley. The intriguing part of this book is the backgrounds of the authors. One is Roman Catholic, and one is Lutheran. One teaches worship, while the other teaches pastoral care. In many other aspects of their lives, they are polar opposites as they note in the "Preface". Out of their differences comes a work that focuses on their similarities: worship and pastoral care. The focus of the book is how various life events, such as marriage, the birth of a child, or death create stories and focal points in which God and humanity interact intimately. As they weave through these life events, they share the importance of story-telling and ritual, honoring both the human and the divine narratives. The outcome is better communication as well as transformation as the human encounters and moves beyond each life event.

Following on the background of pastoral care is the two-volume *Pastoral Care – WIGIAT* by The Rev. Dr. Tony Everett. As the pastoral care professor at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary for many years, he created his two-volume set based on his life experiences as a pastor. His primary question to ask always, as reflected in the

title of the set, is "Where is God in All This (WIGIAT)?" His set incorporates many significant case studies, theological papers, spirituality resources, as well as an extensive bibliography. He uses the biblical story of Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-10) as a model for pastoral care situations. Moses starts in the wilderness (the unknown), encounters a change to the norm (the burning bush), turns aside (realizes God is present), removes his shoes (stands on Holy Ground), and then responds to God's challenge to serve. Finally, Moses prepares for problems through his dialogue with God. Everett uses this model throughout his two-volume set, reminding the readers that where two or more are gathered (such as in pastoral care situations), God is present. He weaves in Lutheran theology, liturgy, and real world experience, creating a resource that is invaluable to those who are called to ministry.

The theological giants of modern Lutheranism have mainly been Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson. Heavily influenced by other theologians such as Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, and Paul Tillich, Braaten and Jenson became two of the most notable Lutheran theologians and teachers of the 20th century. Together they edited and/or authored many books, articles, and publications, including the popular *Christian Dogmatics*. When this two-volume set was published in 1984, it became the theological textbook for many Lutheran seminary students. The six contributors put into writing a current Lutheran theological understanding of Christian doctrine. The two volumes together combine twelve loci, with the first volume addressing The Holy Trinity, Dogmatics, the Identity of God, Creation, Sin and Christology. Volume 2 addresses The Work of Christ, The Holy Spirit, The Church, The Means of Grace, Christian Life, and

Eschatology. Although each locus was written separately from the other eleven, Braaten and Jenson as editors helped bring each locus together to form a much-needed theological resource for the post-modern church.

Jenson also authored *Visible Words*, which is based on what he taught students at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. In his own words, *Visible Words* is what he "laid before students in those years and of the sometimes difficult reflections by which I worked out for myself what that should be."[2] The goal of his essay was to, in his words, "simply explain"[3] the sacraments. But what came out of this work was a book that has now been printed multiple times, and remains a theological treasure for the church catholic.

As Lutheran theology continues to move into the 21st Century, one of the main contributors is Dr. David Yeago. Dr. Yeago continues work on *The Apostolic Faith: A Catholic and Evangelical Introduction to Christian Theology*. While not yet in print, Eerdmans has agreed to publish this book once Dr. Yeago has finished editing it. Dr. Yeago has taught from his manuscript of this book for many years, often correcting or changing it in the middle of a class lecture. His theology is very similar to Braaten and Jenson, with whom he has worked to create published books. Yeago's work is grounded in the theology of Luther, the Roman Catholic tradition, and the Orthodox tradition. *The Apostolic Faith*, once published, will become a staple on the shelves of many Lutheran pastors, just like *Christian Dogmatics*.

---

2. Jenson xiii

3. Jenson xi

While not categorized specifically as a theology book, Raymond E. Brown certainly touches on theology in his *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Walking the reader through each of the New Testament books, Brown covers not only basic theological arguments but also the historical and cultural nature of each New Testament book. This is done alongside background information, tables, maps, appendixes, and an extensive bibliography. Each book is covered concisely, and Brown even attempts to answer modern-day questions about Jesus and theology as he writes. While it is apparent from the title that this book is for students, Brown makes it clear that this is a wealth of knowledge which he gained from his many years teaching, preaching, and studying. He presents it in a neutral format, not even letting his Roman Catholic faith tradition take center stage. Therefore, this book has become more than just an introductory book; it has become a continual wealth of scholarship for teachers and students alike.

Dwelling specifically on Psalm 23 is W. Phillip Keller's *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*. Keller presents an interesting insight into the world of being a shepherd, and how it ties into the Christian faith. In his book, he breaks down Psalm 23 into the individual verses and adds his own experience and insight so that the reader can understand the culturist perspectives of the psalm, as well as how this psalm still relates to believers today.

Another complex wealth of knowledge in regard to the church and theology is Everett Ferguson's *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries*. The strength of Ferguson's work is his in-depth look at each century,

incorporating early Christian Pauline baptismal practices and theology all the way through the early church fathers such as Augustine, Tertullian, and Cyprian. Ferguson analyzes their own theological understandings of baptism and how they compare and contrast with each other. He tackles difficult theological arguments such as Jewish-Christian practices, infant baptism, rebaptism, and even geographical baptismal practices and differences. He includes a study on baptisteries and baptismal practices, often including images he himself took. Finally, Ferguson gives indexes of Greek and Roman authors and writings, Jewish authors and writings, Non-Canonical authors and writings, and even Modern Authors. These indexes give the reader a chance to pinpoint a specific person or writing that has been referenced or used. This is perhaps the most valuable part of Ferguson's work, because it allows the reader to find easily what they are seeking in this 948-page resource.

All of these resources combined together help form an understanding of how grief, the funeral liturgy, and theology of the Lutheran Church are woven together. Yet not all pastors or lay persons are going to use all of these resources when helping individuals and families cope with a loss. What is missing is a single resource that helps make the connection between faith and life when a loss occurs and grief is present.

CHAPTER 4
INTERCEDING FOR THE CHURCH: THE SPIRIT AT WORK

In his 1716 work *The Cobbler of Preston*, Christopher Bullock famously wrote "'Tis impossible to be sure of any thing but Death and Taxes".[1] While this quote has been used by many people in various forms throughout the years since it was penned, it remains true today. To deal with the latter, one turns to a Certified Public Accountant, a Tax Attorney, or another legal entity who works closely with government; but for the former, one turns to different resources. For Christians, the first resource is the church. When it comes to death, the church helps in a variety of ways. Pastors help with planning for and presiding at a service. Members of the church offer meals, condolences, and their talents. All of this is done so the deceased is honored and remembered as the church celebrates their life. Yet, even in the midst of celebration, something else usually abounds: grief.

Grief comes in many forms and due to many situations in life. Humanity works hard to acquire things that make life joyful. We find good jobs. We buy a house which suits our needs and drive a car that fits our personality. Some get married and start families. Some focus on personal health and exercise. All of these give us comfort, joy, and security. What happens, though, if any of those were to be lost? The answer is "we grieve". The comforts and the norms of life become shaken, and we find ourselves in unfamiliar territory. "We seldom appreciate life until we realize how fragile it is, when

1. http://freakonomics.com/2011/02/17/quotes-uncovered-death-and-taxes/ Accessed January 10, 2019

friends and family are taken away from us by death."[2] In the now timeless classic *Good Grief*, Granger E. Westberg identifies the ten stages of grief and how individuals can work through them. They are:

- Stage 1: We are in a State of Shock
- Stage 2: We Express Emotion
- Stage 3: We Feel Depressed and Very Lonely
- Stage 4: We May Experience Physical Symptoms of Distress
- Stage 5: We May Become Panicky
- Stage 6: We Feel a Sense of Guilt about the Loss
- Stage 7: We are Filled with Anger and Resentment
- Stage 8: We Resist Returning
- Stage 9: Gradually Hope Comes Through
- Stage 10: We Struggle to Affirm Reality

As the church helps families and loved ones to honor the life of a member, it also helps them to cope with grief. Resources, such as Westberg's book, may be given to the family and loved ones. Key scripture verses[3] may be offered in hope of comfort. Additionally, perhaps the best resource the church has to offer is the funeral service itself. The funeral service "is an expression of the faith and hope of the community of those who have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ in the face of

2. Kreeft 132

3. See pg. 82

the death of one of its members."[4] The opening rubric of the Funeral Liturgy in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* states: "At a person's death, the church shares the grief of those who mourn and remembers the brevity of life on earth. At the funeral we give voice to sorrow, thank God for our loved one, and entrust this companion of ours in the hands of God."[5] Through the liturgy, the voice of the church is heard. While it may seem people are just reading from the page of the hymnbook, that is not necessarily the case. The voice of the church, through which the Holy Spirit is at work, is heard loudly and clearly. St. Paul alludes to this in Romans 8:26: "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words". As the church prays and sings, we celebrate the life of the deceased, but we do so in a way which helps us to move through our weakness of grief. We forge ahead, with hope in what God has done through his Son. "The classical function of the funeral is to care for and dispose of the bodily remains, to comfort the bereaved and to praise God for life, proclaiming the hope of the resurrection."[6] This brief definition reminds us of how the liturgy can function to help us with our grief. As we believe it is the Spirit who is alive and well in the liturgy, therefore we believe it is this very Spirit, the Holy Comforter[7], who is at work through the church to help us in our weakness.

---

4. Pfatteicher, 1990 475

5. Evangelical Lutheran Worship 279

6. Saliers 63

7. John 14:26

Prayer is the form that believers use to speak with and listen to God. Prayer happens in all facets of life. It is particularly present when a loved one dies. The same can be said about grief. "Through the centuries people who have been able to face grief in the knowledge that God still cares about them have said that grief can be counted among the great deepening experiences of life."[8] As an individual works through this experience, the church offers hope, comfort, and help. How does the church aid in this? In order to answer this question, we must look at how the funeral liturgy is formed, from scripture used in the liturgy itself to the ancient prayers still used today. Then using Westberg's classic resource, we find that the liturgy becomes the means through which the bereaved work through several of the 10 Stages of Grief. According to Westberg, though, we must "remember that every person does not go through all these stages, nor in this order."[9] Grieving individuals may only encounter a few of the 10 Stages of Grief. Their grief may be different if they are surrounded by family and friends, or if they grieve alone. No matter the circumstance, there is help. It is in the church that we find our faith and hope converging. As family and friends gather to celebrate the life of the deceased, they turn to the God of their ancestors to help them in their time of weakness. It is in the liturgy where we find the work of the Spirit interceding for us as we look to the One who helps us "in the midst of things we cannot understand."[10]

---

8. Westberg 19

9. Westberg 19

10. ELW Pastoral Care (Prayers of Intercession) 239

The convergence of faith and hope is found in the liturgy. The word *liturgy* is rooted in the classical Greek word *leitourgia*, which is often translated as "the work of the people."[11] It can apply not only to the funeral service itself but to other worship services such as the Sunday Morning Mass, a wedding, and other festival celebrations of the church year. All of these services of worship are seen as public, distinguishing the liturgy which is found in the church's public worship service from private or individual worship. The liturgy is "the vehicle by which the public worship of God is performed."[12] Therefore, we should also have worship that, according to Paul, is "done decently and in order." [13] As a person grieves the loss of a loved one, the funeral liturgy provides the support they need in a very present time of uncertainty, both from the Holy Spirit at work in the liturgy and from the congregation.

Those gathering for public worship express their faith through a variety of methods (singing hymns, prayer, public proclamation of the Gospel, etc.). However, "not every pastor or congregation looks to published liturgies for guidance on funerals."[14] There are many denominations that leave the decisions of the service itself to the pastor. Albs, stoles, and robes, as well as other ritualistic appointments, may or may not be used. However, many liturgical churches follow a specific order to their services, both funeral and non-funeral, based on the ancient order of worship presented at the end of Acts 2:

---

11. Pfatteicher and Messerli 9

12. Senn 5

13. 1 Corinthians 14:40

14. Long 150

> [42] They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. [43] Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. [44] All who believed were together and had all things in common; [45] they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. [46] Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, [47] praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.[15]

In regard to the funeral liturgy, the Lutheran denomination still follows an orthodox order. The Rev. Dr. Phillip H. Pfatteicher notes that the expression of faith and hope is shown through three aspects of the worship service: (1) prayer for the one who has died, commending that person to the care of God; (2) comfort of the bereaved with the assurance of the power and goodness of the living God; and (3) praise to God "to whom all things live," the destroyer of death and the source of life and salvation.[16] Family, friends, and loved ones all gather for a public service of worship to God. The funeral home assisting the family will help with honoring the deceased, which may include drafting an obituary. Obituaries function in two ways. First, they serve as public announcements, and secondly, they clarify if the public is invited to the service. In recent years the publication of obituaries has not just involved newspapers and printed media. Today an obituary can be found on the website of the funeral home. Online condolences can be made in addition to the signing of a guest registry that is often present both at the viewing (or gathering if the remains are cremated) and the service.

The Lutheran funeral liturgy is considered a *Service of the Word*, which may or may not include *The Rite of Holy Communion*. While there are several Lutheran

---

15. Acts 2:42-47

16. Pfatteicher, 1990 475

hymnbooks, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations utilize either the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (*LBW*) or *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (*ELW*) as the primary source of the funeral liturgy. Both services use slightly revised prayers from the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer*.[17]

The order of worship as prescribed in the *Burial of the Dead (LBW*) or *Funeral* (*ELW*) begins outside of the sanctuary at the entrance to the church. The bereaved (often just the family), the minister, the pallbearers, and the funeral director from the funeral home meet the coffin or cremated ashes for the start of the liturgical service. Once everyone is gathered, the liturgical service begins not with prayer but with the comfort of the words of Holy Scripture itself. In both the *LBW* and the *ELW* the words of St. Paul are used, first from 2 Corinthians 1:

> [3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, [4] who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God.[18]

This "blessing of the God of consolation"[19] is then followed by Paul's baptismal connection to death as found in Romans 6:

> [3] Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. [5] For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.[20]

---

17. Pfatteicher, 1990 485 ff.

18. 2nd Corinthians 1:3-4

19. Pfatteicher and Messerli 357

20. Romans 6:3-5

Paul is not the only theologian to recognize and name the connection between baptism and death. Lutheran theology affirms death as "a stage in the fulfillment of Baptism."[21] In his work *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism,* Martin Luther wrote:

> This significance of baptism – the dying or drowning of sin – is not fulfilled completely in this life. Indeed this does not happen until a person passes through bodily death and completely decays to dust. As we can plainly see, the sacrament or sign of baptism is quickly over. But the spiritual baptism, the drowning of sin, which it signifies, lasts as long as we live and is completed only in death. Then it is that a person is completely sunk in baptism, and that which baptism signifies comes to pass.
>
> Therefore this whole life is nothing else than a spiritual baptism which does not cease until death. The one who is baptized is condemned to death as if the priest, when he baptizes, were to say, "See, you are sinful flesh. Therefore I drown you in God's name and in God's name condemn you to death, so that all your sins along with you die and perish." Wherefore St. Paul, in Romans 6[:4] says "we have been buried with Christ by baptism into death." The sooner a person dies after baptism the sooner his baptism is completed….There is no help for the sinful nature unless it dies and is destroyed with all its sin. Therefore the life of a Christian, from baptism to the grave, is nothing else than the beginning of a holy death. For at the Last Day God will make that person altogether new.
>
> Similarly the lifting up out of the baptismal water is quickly done, but the thing it signifies –spiritual birth, the increase of grace and righteousness – certainly begins in baptism but continues until death, indeed, until the Last Day. Only then will everything that baptism signifies be complete. Then will we arise from death, from sins, and from all evil, pure in body and soul, and then we will live eternally. Then will we be truly lifted up out of baptism and be completely born and we will put on the true baptismal robe of immortal life in heaven.[22]

Both Luther and Paul share in the theological connection of baptism and death. "At the heart of Christian worship is Jesus Christ, given to God through concrete and

---

21. Pfatteicher, 1990 477

22. Martin Luther, "The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism" *The Annotated Luther Vol. 1 – The Roots of Reform 209-210*

specific means. Through baptism God makes a people one body in Christ."[23] Luther also addressed the blessings of baptism in relation to death in *The Large Catechism.*

> In baptism, therefore, every Christian has enough to study and practice all his or her life. Christians always have enough to do to believe firmly what baptism promises and bring - - victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God's grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit and his gifts. In short, the blessings of baptism are so boundless that if our timid nature considers them, it may well doubt whether they could all be true. Suppose there were a physician who had so much skill that people would not die, or even though they died would afterward live eternally. Just think how the world would snow and rain money upon such a person! Because of the throng of rich people crowding around, no one else would be able to get near. Now, here in baptism there is brought, free of charge, to every person's door just such a treasure and medicine that swallows up death and keeps all people alive.[24]

Luther used an allegory to show how precious the gifts of baptism are and how they are related to death. Using a visible sign instead on an allegory, the funeral liturgy also expresses this connection through the use of a funeral pall. As Romans 6 is read, the coffin is covered by the pall as a very visible symbol of covering the person with Christ's righteousness. The use of the pall is also a symbol of unity among the members of the church catholic. St. Paul expressed this unity in his letter to the church at Galatia:

> [27] As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. [28] There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.[25]

This is the same unity which the church still confesses in the Apostle's Creed. The action of covering the casket with the pall also recalls "the white robe given in

---

23. Holy Communion and Related Rites 3

24. Kolb and Wengert 461-462

25. Galatians 3:27-28

baptism, the robe of Christ's righteousness."[26] The use of the reading from Romans 6, combined with the covering of the coffin with the pall, helps the Body of Christ to name faith and hope in a public manner. Rather than trying to come up with a new way to bless God and remember our baptisms, the church uses the Spirit-inspired words of Paul's letter. Placing the pall serves as a visible action through which God's grace is realized. The tradition of the church at baptism is to cover the newly baptized with a white garment. The action of placing a pall over the casket at the start of the funeral liturgy mirrors the baptismal action. It recalls God's saving action in the waters of the font, reminding those who have gathered that God's work continues beyond the time of death. This simple action is a physical reminder of the hope of salvation that the church believes and proclaims.

As the clothed coffin then makes its entry into the sanctuary, "the body is brought into the church even as the person, clothed in the robe of Christ's righteousness, will be brought before the Judge, who is Love himself."[27] It is at this brief start to the liturgy where the stages of grief may become very apparent, even raw.

Attending a funeral is not a normal part of daily life, with the exception of those who work at funeral homes. Even pastors and workers of the church do not experience daily funerals. Standing at the doors of the church, with the remains of the deceased present, makes the start of a funeral a very real moment in time. Westberg lists the second stage of grief as emotion. As the procession starts towards the chancel area of

26. Pfatteicher, 1990 477

27. Pfatteicher, 1990 484

the church, the congregation either sings a hymn (often a favorite of the deceased or family), or music is played. Appropriate hymnody is crucial to the service itself, as hymns bookend the entrance into and exit from the sanctuary. If favorite hymns are chosen by the family and loved ones, this may rekindle a range of emotions, notably as the funeral procession enters into the sanctuary. Favorite hymns need to follow the pattern of being appropriate for worship and recalling God's saving actions. After all, a funeral is primarily and first a worship service to God. Secular songs, while popular, may not be appropriate or theologically correct. Therefore they are not to be used. It is also important that any music used at a funeral is appropriate, utilizing the gifts of those who are present and offering back to God what God has first given to his people. This is recalled in the offertory prayer:

> Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.[28]

Prior to the hymn the funeral liturgy does not involve a vocal response from the family and loved ones, only from the congregation. However, as the family enters the sanctuary the funeral becomes very real, for the time to say goodbye to their loved one in the church is at hand.

The church is not "in favor of an emotion*less* religion."[29] Crying is one of the most basic forms of human emotion, and it is perhaps the most notable emotion that is

---

28. ELW 107

29. Westberg 26

visibly present at a funeral. Prior to the funeral, the family and loved ones of the deceased may have already experienced this stage. In addition to this second stage, they may have already experienced the first stage, or the stage of shock surrounding the death of the loved one. Having emotion at the funeral does not mean the first stage has been completed, but it does suggest the individual is beginning to move through a variety of stages. In many cases, especially with those who have lived a long life, the first stage may not even be present in the life of the bereaved. For some, the first stage or a stage in which they are moving through may be a sense of release or relief[30], especially following a long period of sickness or a decline in health.

As the processional moves toward the chancel, an order to the procession is usually followed. The Processional Cross goes first, followed by the Paschal Candle or torches. The minister, coffin, and bereaved follow. "The symbolic intent of this order of the procession is that the symbols of Christ go first – cross, paschal candle, minister – and then the dead and the living follow where 'Christ has led the way,' as the final prayer at the grave puts it."[31] This walk towards the chancel is a walk toward hope, which is one of the final stages of grief, according to Westberg.[32] This can be a calming walk in the midst of what otherwise could be seen as a ferocious storm; or, this walk could open up the floodgates of emotion that help the other stages of grief become very visible in the bereaved. This walk is also a good reminder that the funeral liturgy is a

30. *Newsweek* staff published an article on January 28, 2007 titled "The Stage of Grief no one admits to: Relief".

31. Pfatteicher and Messerli 357

32. Grief stage 9

"baptismal and an Easter liturgy setting for the paschal passage from death to life."[33] Both baptismal and Easter liturgical services of worship are seen as joyful times by the Body of Christ. Neither baptisms nor the Easter liturgy are seen as sorrowful times in that they celebrate what God has done in his Son Jesus Christ. Therefore it is important for the Body of Christ to frame a funeral as a "Celebration of the Life Of _*name*_." Use of this title, while a minor part of the funeral itself, is a reminder that God is at work and that Christian hope lies in His promises. The walk from the entrance of the church to the chancel also mirrors our walk of life. We are born into the family of God at baptism and enter into his eternal sanctuary at death.

As the processional hymn draws to a close, the coffin or urn is placed in front of the Paschal Candle, loved one take their seats, and the service turns to prayer. The pastor and congregation greet each other using the words of the Apostolic Greeting before the prayer of the day is offered.

> **Pastor:** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
>
> **Congregation:** And also with you.[34]

This is the beginning of the *Liturgy of the Word*. The first prayer, "O God of grace and glory…", is a revised version of a prayer which was used in *The Book of Common Prayer* (1928) Rite II, and is appropriate for the burial of an adult. Both *LBW* and *ELW* give other optional prayers. Some name the deceased, as the first prayer does. *ELW* also

33. Pfatteicher, 1990 477

34. ELW 280

includes an optional prayer of the day that may be used, especially at the death of a child.[35]

The purpose of the prayer of the day "is to catch up in a stitch or two the fact of death and the prayer expressions of the congregation in this moment."[36] It usually comes in collect form, which normally has five elements. This is true of the "O God of grace and glory" prayer of the day, which is diagramed below.

1st Element (Name of God):	*O God*
2nd Element (Attribute of God):	*of grace and glory,*
3rd Element (Thanksgiving):	*we remember before you today our sister/brother, <u>name .</u> We thank you for giving him/her to us to know and to love as a companion in our pilgrimage on earth.*
4th Element (Petition):	*In your boundless compassion, console us who mourn. Give us the faith to see that death has been swallowed up in the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
5th Element (Reason):	*so that we may live in confidence and hope, until by your call, we are gathered to our heavenly home in the company of all your saints;*
Closing:	*through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.* ***Amen****.*

After the prayer of the day, the funeral liturgy takes the form of the *Liturgy of the Word.* Several lessons are read, usually consisting of A) An Old Testament text, B) a

35. ELW 281

36. Long 160

Psalm, C) a New Testament text, and D) a Gospel text. While not limited to the following, below are some of the most frequently used texts.

Old Testament Readings:	Job 19:23-27a Isaiah 25:6-9; 40:11 (for a child); 61:1-3 Hosea 11:1,3-4 (for a child) Lamentations 3:22-26, 31-33
Psalms:	23, 90, 42:1-7, 46, 118, 121, 130, 143
New Testament Readings:	Romans 5:1-11 and 17-21 Romans 8:31-35, 37-39; and 14:7-9 1 Corinthians 15:12-26; 15:51-57 Philippians 3:20-21 1 Peter 1:3-9 1 John 3:1-2 Revelation 7:9-17; 21:2-7
Gospel Readings:	Matthew 11:25-30; 19:14 (for a child) Matthew 25:1-13 Luke 12:35-40 John 5:24-29; 6:37-40; 11:21-27; 12:23-36 John 14:1-6

Several of these texts are used in the service itself, especially at the committal. Like the Prayer of the Day, there are options particularly suitable for use when the funeral is for a child. In some instances, the service may not have all four readings. The rubrics of the *ELW* allow for "two or three scripture readings" to be proclaimed. However, if the funeral includes the Rite of Holy Communion, the rubrics specify that "the last is a reading from the gospels."[37] The *LBW Occasional Services* book specifies that either John 11:21-27 or John 14:1-6 as the Gospel reading. However, the rubrics do

37. ELW – Leaders Desk Edition 669

allow for another appropriate gospel reading.[38] While the above readings are preferable, the family or loved ones may choose to go in a different direction based on a favorite verse of the deceased or family. This option is suitable, especially if it speaks to the faith and life of the deceased and the reading is scriptural.

Although there are several psalms that are appropriate for funerals, Psalm 23 is more often than not chosen as the psalm to be read. It is a particular psalm which gives comfort and speaks of God's presence even in the midst of trouble. It provides a picture of moving from fear and unknown into the comfort of dwelling with the Lord forever. As Keller notes, this psalm reminds of us of "moving from sin into the life of overcoming victory. We are promised such a life. It has been provided for us and is made possible by the unrelenting effort of Christ on our behalf."[39]

After the readings comes a somewhat debatable part of the worship: eulogy vs. sermon. The rubrics in both the *ELW* and the *LBW* state that the sermon follows the readings.[40] They do not mention eulogies at all. A eulogy is a brief statement which is meant to recall the memories of the recently departed. It usually is not biblically based, but it instead highlights key moments in the life of the departed. In certain circles of Christianity eulogies are welcomed. In others, they are forbidden. For example, Fr. Alfred McBride, O. Praem., a well-known Catholic homilist, remarks, "If possible, have guest eulogies at the wake service. Or, if a eulogy is given after Communion, do

38. LBW Occasional Services 119

39. Keller 55

40. ELW 281; LBW 208

whatever you can to keep it short."[41] The rubrics in the Roman Catholic *The Order of Christian Funerals* actually forbid eulogies altogether: "A brief homily based on the readings is always given after the gospel reading at the funeral liturgy and may also be given after the readings at the vigil service; but there is never to be a eulogy."[42]

In Lutheranism, sermons or homilies are preferable for the service. However, having a sermon or homily is not a command written in stone. The *Manual on the Liturgy* gives the presiding minister the option: "The sermon will usually be a part of the service, but when circumstances suggest, it may be omitted."[43] The *Manual on the Liturgy* also addresses eulogies and their use in relationship of the sermon: "The sermon may include recognition of the life of the deceased, but its purpose is not eulogy but a proclamation of hope and comfort in Christ."[44] However, like the use of a sermon, the *Manual on the Liturgy* also offers an option. "In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate for relatives or associates of the deceased to comment briefly on the meaning of the life of the deceased for the community, but this must not overshadow or exclude a proclamation of the Gospel by the preacher."[45] The heart of this matter, sermon vs. eulogy, is the proclamation of the Gospel. This is the focus. Recognition of the life of the deceased is certainly important and is worthy of mention, but the death

41. McBride 89

42. The Order of Christian Funerals 8

43. Pfatteicher and Messerli 360

44. Pfatteicher and Messerli 360

45. Pfatteicher and Messerli 360

and resurrection of Christ is to be the focus of the funeral. This is because, through the sermon, the Holy Spirit speaks.

At this point in the funeral liturgy, the congregation has heard the Word proclaimed through several lessons. Now through the preacher the Spirit speaks, reminding those who grieve that God is able to do things which we cannot understand. Scott Gibson relays this point nicely: "Today preachers face a great challenge as they preach Christ in a culture that does not know much about him and in a culture that avoids thinking about death."[46] Therefore, it is all the more important to preach Christ crucified and Christ resurrected. What is not appropriate though is turning the sermon into an act of evangelism for the church. Evangelism is not the purpose, even though "preaching by its very nature is evangelistic."[47] The pastor must be mindful that while there are people present who do not have a relationship with God, remembering and celebrating the life of the deceased is the purpose of the day. Doing so in a Christian manner means this is done through first proclaiming what God has done in and through the Son, namely, the victory over death and the grave. The primary purpose of the funeral sermon is not an altar call in the traditional sense, as that may only anger the family and/or drive away even farther those who have already removed themselves from the church.

Those who are grieving are looking for hope. The sermon offers personal words of comfort based on the texts, helping the family as they work through Stage 9. The

46. Gibson 49

47. Gibson 51

Spirit speaks through the pastor to assure the congregation and the family/loved ones that God is present even in this moment. The *Augsburg* Confession addresses the Office of Preaching and its duties in Article V:

> To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel. It teaches that we have a gracious God, not through our merit but through Christ's merit, when we so believe. [48]

At ordination, each ordinand is charged with their responsibility as a pastor. To preach the gospel and to be a witness to God's presence, especially during a funeral, is in keeping with these charges that each pastor must answer to. Specifically charged to the ordinand is that they will be faithful in their use of the Holy Scriptures, as well as the witness to the scriptures by the Lutheran Confessions.

> **Bishop:** The church is which you are to be ordained confesses that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God and are the norm of its faith and life. We accept, teach, and confess the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds. We also acknowledge the Lutheran Confessions as true witnesses and faithful expositions of the Holy Scriptures. Will you therefore preach and teach in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and these creeds and confessions?
>
> **Ordinand:** I will, and I ask God to help me.[49]

During the funeral sermon (or homily), the pastor may even acknowledge and affirm that the family or loved ones are going through the stages of grief. Everett calls this "part of the normal process of God's creation in helping to heal deep wounds of loss."[50] As we all cope with grief differently, the sermon needs to be tailored to the

---

48. Kolb and Wengert 40

49. Occasional Services 194

50. Everett 49

occasion. However, in all circumstances we can compare the experiences of the family and loved ones up alongside Westberg's book and use it as a guide to help move through the grief process. Our journey through the grief process is one that is headed toward hope and affirmation of reality. This is difficult, though, as "holding on to hope is the challenge of all grief and loss experience."[51] Preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ points in the right direction, as his resurrection is reality and continues to give hope. McBride makes this point multiple times: "the attention should be on Christ and his saving graces" and "always give hope in eternal life."[52]

After the sermon or homily, the congregation once again stands to sing the Hymn of the Day. Like the processional hymn, this hymn should be a hymn of glory to God. A hymn which is used during the Easter liturgical season is especially appropriate. Today there are various hymnbooks available for use. Even in the Lutheran tradition, the *LBW* and *ELW* are not the only choices. Many Lutheran congregations supplement or have replaced their *LBW* and/or *ELW* hymnbooks with others, such as *With One Voice*, *The Gather Hymnal*, *The Lutheran Service Book*, and *This Far by Faith*. Many funeral homes have available a variety of hymnals from multiple denominations as well as the licensing needed to reprint music and hymns. Because of this variety, the hymnody contained in each hymnal may have differences. The Hymn of the Day continues the theme of the texts and, if possible, the sermon. This means that it too should focus on the work of God in this world. Again, hymns which are used during the

51. Metzgar 54

52. McBride 89

Easter season often accomplish this and should be used if possible. It may be the case, though, that the family and loved ones choose a favorite hymn to use. This may be a hymn that is relevant to the life of the deceased, was used at significant events in their life (baptism, confirmation, marriage, etc.), or is a particular favorite of the family. This favorite hymn may fit better at the end of the service if it does not reflect the texts and the proclamation of the Word through the sermon. The use of such a hymn can be seen as a reflection of the grief which the family and loved ones are experiencing. It can provide a sense of familiarity if the third stage of grief (Depression and Loneliness) is present in those who are grieving.

A complete and exhaustive list of funeral-appropriate hymns is never-ending, primarily because of the availability of resources and hymnbooks available. The following is a brief list of funeral-appropriate hymns as used in Lutheranism. Many of these hymns can be found in the *LBW*, *With One Voice* (companion to the *LBW*), *ELW*, and the *LSB*. While not exhaustive by any means, it is a good reference point from which to start. One will need to consult the hymnal used by the congregation in order to get page numbers, unless licensing allows for the hymn to be printed in the bulletin or as an insert. Many funeral homes also keep on hand a small library of hymnbooks used by congregations local to them. If the family requests a hymn which is not in the hymnbook used by the parish, the funeral home may be able to serve as a resource.

- *Beautiful Savior*
- *Amazing Grace*
- *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*

- *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*
- *My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*
- *Children of the Heavenly Father*
- *Now Thank We All Our God*
- *A Mighty Fortress is our God*
- *For All the Saints*
- *I Know that My Redeemer Lives*
- *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*
- *Let All Things Now Living*
- *Precious Lord, Take My Hand*
- *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*
- *When Peace Like a River*
- *The King of Love My Shepherd Is*
- Any Easter-appropriate hymn
- Hymns especially appropriate at Baptism
- Hymns especially appropriate at the Celebration of Holy Communion (If Communion is a part of the liturgy)

At this point in the funeral liturgy, the service turns its attention to the faith and prayer of the church. The congregation may confess the Apostle's Creed, which is introduced with the reminder, "God has made us his people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith."[53] This introduction is a

53. LBW 209

reminder to all who are honoring the deceased of the unity that is shared through Baptism into Christ. At Baptism, Christians are "sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever."[54] Even at this moment of a profession of faith, those who are grieving are reminded of the Spirit's work in and through the service. In his *Small Catechism* Martin Luther divides the creed into three articles. The first article is on creation, the second article is on redemption, and the third article is on being made holy. In this explanation of the third article, Luther answers the question "What is this?" with a detailed interpretation.

> I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins – mine and those of all believers. On the Last Day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.[55]

We hear the Spirit's voice in the midst of professing our belief through the confessing of the Apostle's Creed. It is the Holy Spirit (to use Luther's explanation) who enables us to believe in God in the first place. Therefore, professing one's faith through the use of the creed is a reminder that even in the midst of a funeral and the accompanying grief, the Holy Spirit is an omnipresent comfort and guide.

From the creed the liturgy transitions to the prayers of the church. These prayers remind us of the unity which God's people have with one another through his

---

54. ELW 231

55. Martin Luther, "The Small Catechism" *The Annotated Luther Vol. 4 – Pastoral Writings 225*

Son, Jesus Christ. Many of these prayers are based on the collects used in the *Book of Common Prayer*.[56] Through the prayers, the Spirit asks on our behalf that the deceased will rise to newness of life; that those of us still in our pilgrimage will be guided by faith through the power of the Holy Spirit; that we will receive pardon and peace; that we will be granted a sure confidence in the love of God; that we will receive courage, faith, and comfort in the hope of eternal life; and we may believe and trust in the things we cannot understand. The church also prays for the deceased, entrusting him/her into the "never-failing love" that sustained them in this life, while also asking God to receive them into his arms of mercy.[57] The prayers conclude with a final petition, and then the liturgy can transition to one of two options. The first is to follow the prayers with the Lord's Prayer. Lutherans use one of two translations of the Lord's Prayer. Their use varies by congregations. The two translations are as follows:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen	Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen[58]

56. See Pfatteicher, 1990 491ff.

57. LBW (Prayers of the Church) 209-210

58. LBW Occasional Services 122-123

The second option has the sharing of the peace following the prayers. This option is used if Holy Communion will be celebrated during the funeral liturgy. In this case, the Lord's Prayer becomes a part of the Communion Liturgy as the congregation celebrates the sharing of Christ's body and blood.

While not always celebrated at a funeral, the Eucharist is an appropriate rite. It transforms the liturgy from a service of the word into a celebration rite. Pfatteicher notes:

> The Holy Communion is appropriate at the death of a Christian because of the paschal character of the Eucharist, which celebrates and makes new Christ's passion, death and resurrection. It binds those who share it in intimate communion with God and his church, with angels and all the saints, living and departed.[59]

Holy Communion is the uniting of those still alive (church militant) with those who are now deceased (church triumphant). Therefore, sharing this meal together is an expression of the promised life. It speaks to the grief of the living through a means of hope and strength.

Funeral liturgies which include the celebration of Holy Communion continue with the sharing of the peace after the prayers, prior to the Great Thanksgiving. This is the one time during a funeral liturgy in which the congregation and those who grieve share communication through a gesture. The sharing of the peace in the ancient church was the "kiss of peace".[60] In modern times, though, congregants prefer to shake hands or hug, along with offering a verbal "peace be with you." Those who were not able to

---

59. Pfatteicher, 1990 496

60. Senn 194

attend the funeral home viewing or pre-service viewing may take this time to offer their presence and God's peace to the family. As The Rev. Dr. Frank Senn notes, though, "This is not a time to socialize with parishioners; it is an act of reconciliation."[61] It is instead a chance for the bereaved to experience the grace and peace of God working through others.

Within the context of the funeral liturgy, the sharing of the peace can take on a different nature, especially in light of grief. It can show "dramatically and tangibly the presence and support of the surrounding community."[62] Therefore, the sharing of the peace becomes an intimate and powerful part of the liturgy. It is a visible reminder to those who grieve that they are not alone and that they are not going through this process by themselves, even if the third stage (We Feel Depressed and Very Lonely) of Westberg's grief stages become visible. Many of those who grieve "need the warm affection and encouragement of those about us."[63] The sharing of the peace can offer a brief moment of relief from this need. The Spirit speaks to this need also, especially in the prayer petitions of the funeral liturgy and the scripture references. "The Spirit also teaches us – both through the Church, which he ensouls, and individually – to pray and worship."[64] In this speaking and teaching we find comfort, especially when grief hits us. This is particularly visible between one of the last petitions of the prayers of the church "Help us, we pray, in the midst of things we cannot understand, to believe and trust in

---

61. Senn 197

62. Pfatteicher, 1990 496

63. Westberg 54

64. Kreeft 96

the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection to life everlasting"[65] and the words of Hebrews 12:1-2:

> Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, [2] looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

The sharing of the peace also provides a transition between the prayers which the church just prayed together and the celebration of Holy Communion, another act in which the congregation will participate in together. Having been reconciled to one another, the congregation now comes forward to partake of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, a foretaste of the feast to come. In the meal, they celebrate with all the saints, including the recently deceased, the victory which Jesus has accomplished on the cross. Peter J. Kreeft offers a short summation of the Roman Catholic understanding of this: "The Eucharist does not repeat this sacrifice, but re-presents it to the Father. The sacrifice that was accomplished on Calvary is offered again in each Mass. It can be offered now only *because* 'it is finished', perfected, 'a perfect offering.'"[66] As the Holy Communion is celebrated at the funeral liturgy, those who grieve and also have a strong relationship with God know "they still have God on whom to rely."[67]

The conclusion of the funeral liturgy in the church is for the pastor(s) to take his/her/their place at the coffin and offer the commendation. The commendation is an

---

65. LBW 210

66. Kreeft 326-327

67. Westberg 59

addition to the liturgical service, primarily because "many of those who attend the funeral service in the church do not go to the cemetery for the burial."[68] The Lutheran commendation in the *LBW* is taken identically from the *Book of Common Prayer* (1928), and it is a similar abbreviated form of "A Commendatory Prayer when the Soul is Departed" which has its roots in John Cosin's 1627 *Collection of Private Devotions*. In this prayer, the church asks God to receive the deceased. It is a "concluding statement of trust to console the living with the knowledge of God's care for all his children now and forever."[69] It commends the deceased as a child of God to Christ, emphasizing multiple times that the deceased is "your own" in relation to God. It recalls the words and actions of Baptism, as well as the opening Pauline words of the liturgy. By death, baptism has reached its fullness, and the child of God is truly God's own and in God's eternal care.

The committal is the final part of the funeral liturgy and takes place at the place of interment. Pfatteicher calls the committal "the turning point for mourners."[70] After everyone has gathered at the final resting place of the deceased, scripture and prayer are used. In the *LBW* service, the grave is consecrated through prayer, having already been sanctified by Christ's destruction of death. This prayer, which is drawn from the Roman Catholic Rite of Funerals, is as follows:

> Almighty God, by the death and burial of Jesus, your anointed, you have destroyed death and sanctified the graves of all your saints. Keep our

68. Pfatteicher, 1990 498

69. Pfatteicher, 1990 499

70. Pfatteicher, 1990 502

brother/sister, whose *body* we now lay to rest, in the company of all your saints and, at the last, raise *him/her* up to share with all your faithful people the endless joy and peace won through the glorious resurrection of Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.[71]

The pastor casts sand or dirt on the coffin or urn (sometimes in the form of a cross), commends him/her to the eternal care of God, and blesses the deceased. Throwing dirt on the grave is an ancient custom that "enacts the acceptance of death."[72] In previous generations the casting of dirt was done by all who had gathered at the grave. In modern day practice, the pastor does it. Funeral Homes often provide a small container of sand for the pastor, while others may choose to use dirt from the actual grave. The acceptance of death by those that have gathered at the graveside is very real. But even as they experience this and soon return to their life without the deceased, the work of God is not done. The commendation places the deceased solely in the care of God, blessing him/her as a Christian and acknowledging the hope of the resurrection that Christians believe in. The tradition of the church used to be that the coffin was lowered into the grave as this commendation was said. Today, the standard practice is that the coffin is not lowered until all have left the graveside.

The final prayers offer eschatological hope for the deceased and those who mourn. The Lord's Prayer is prayed again by all present, and a final blessing for the deceased is said:

Pastor: Rest eternal grant *him/her*, O Lord;

---

71. LBW Occasional Services 125

72. Pfatteicher 1990 502

Assistant: and let light perpetual shine upon *him/her*.[73]

This final blessing of the deceased is based on the apocryphal book of 2nd Esdras.

> [34] Therefore I say to you, O nations that hear and understand, "Wait for your shepherd; he will give you everlasting rest, because he who will come at the end of the age is close at hand. [35] Be ready for the rewards of the kingdom, because perpetual light will shine on you forevermore.[74]

A benediction for those gathered based on Hebrews 13:20-21 concludes the rite. The final word is a dismissal: "Let us go in peace."[75] This final word brings the entire funeral liturgy to an end, with a word of hope and peace which the world cannot give. It is an affirmation of Christ's victory on the cross and of God's provision of eternal care to those who rest in His peace.

This final step in the funeral liturgy also tends to bring out the most intense emotions. Several of Westberg's Stages of Grief may become apparent, including but not limited to: Emotion (Stage 2), Becoming Panicky (Stage 5), and Struggling to Affirm Reality (Stage 10). Because of this, it is crucial for the family and loved ones of the deceased to receive support from the pastor as well as friends and family. Whereas the tradition in the church was for the family to watch the coffin being lowered into the ground or the ashes placed in their niche, this tradition has now shifted. One local funeral director reports that less than 5% of the funerals with which they assist have the families stay at the grave. As is becoming more of the custom, families of the deceased may greet those who attended the funeral in the fellowship hall or another gathering

---

73. LBW Occasional Services 127

74. 2 Esdras 2:34-35

75. LBW 214

place of the church. If the funeral was at a cemetery away from the church, there may or may not be a place for such greetings. The family may return to the church for this, and perhaps even share a meal together. Many churches offer either a pre- or post-funeral meal as an offering of love and support to those that grieve. While this can be overwhelming and exhausting to some, public support can be a tremendous gift to others. Like the stages of grief, all react differently.

The one aspect which people do not often talk about at funerals is how death is a norm in our lives; by the same token, so is grief. Therefore, it is appropriate to add a third dimension to this normalcy: the church, specifically, the work of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit is to the Church what the soul is to the body."[76] It is the Holy Spirit that speaks to us through the scriptures and as we profess in the Creeds of the Church. For Lutherans, having a funeral liturgy that is made up mainly of scripture and prayer shows how active God is in moments of grief and sadness. In those moments, we do not worship a God that is far away and out of touch; we worship a God who comes to us: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."[77]

As families and loved ones gather in the church for a funeral, they find a place in which God is very present. The Word of God is proclaimed, prayer is offered, God is worshiped, and the deceased is remembered. The funeral liturgy provides holy moments in which the baptismal promises come to fruition. Therefore, while it is a service which brings many of the stages of grief, it is a joyful service. Within the

76. Kreeft 96

77. Matthew 18:20

Lutheran tradition there are additional liturgies which can be used along the funeral liturgy. These include *Commendation of the Dying* and *Comforting the Bereaved*. Additionally, many churches celebrate the festival of All Saints Day on November 1 or transfer the celebration to the Sunday immediately following November 1. These are all additional ways in which the deceased may be remembered, and all also share connections with the stages of grief similar to the funeral liturgy.

Two of the above mentioned services may, but are not always, offered at or near the time of death. They are very personal services that have been included in the multiple hymnals mentioned previously. While not all pastors use these two services, they are a crucial part of the ministry of the church to those that are dying and those that are grieving. Their use is strongly recommended, whether the pastor feels confident enough to use them or not. Even though they both are to take place before the funeral liturgy, they are included on the end of this resource solely because they are not universally used throughout Lutheranism.

The first of these liturgies, the brief *Commendation of the Dying,* is a ministry of the church which is provided when a person is near death. Both the *ELW* and the *LBW* versions of this service begin with a prayer asking God to comfort the Christian that is near death "with the promise of life with all your saints in your eternal kingdom."[78] This is a specific prayer, in which the pastor uses the baptismal name of the Christian. A litany follows this opening prayer. Used in the call and response format, the litany can help those family members and loved ones who are gathered at the bedside express

78. Occasional Services 103, ELW Pastoral Care 214

their emotions[79] through prayer to God. The litany also may help them remember that they are not alone[80], and that throughout this time of grief not only is God walking with them, but the church is as well. As the pastor moves through the service, those who are gathered hear lots of words of hope. The Lord's Prayer is prayed, and the pastor releases the Christian into the care of God through the laying on of hands as the following is said:

> *Name* , Child of God, go forth in the name of God the Father Almighty who created you; in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who redeemed you; in the name of the Holy Spirit who was poured out upon you. May you rest in peace and dwell forever in the paradise of God. Amen.[81]

This brief ministry of the church provides words of comfort and hope to those who are grieving. When used in conjunction with the funeral liturgy, there is a continuation of the ministry of the church to those who are suffering grief. Because death may occur several days before the funeral, this brief liturgy gives the family a chance to begin working through the stages of grief. Before the funeral has even started the family is reminded of the baptismal promises made by God that his children are his forever. As the family moves from death towards the funeral the pastor and church may choose to use the next liturgy.

The second liturgy which may be used and therefore is a continuation of the ministry of the church is found in the use of *Comforting the Bereaved*. Like *Commendation of the Dying*, this service is a brief liturgy which is used with the family

---

79. Grief stage 2

80. Grief stage 3

81. ELW Pastoral Care 217

and loved ones of the deceased. Its main function is to provide comfort through scripture readings and prayer. The pastor has multiple scriptural options available for use. The scripture choices that are available for the pastor to use are familiar ones which may also be used in the funeral service itself. They include Psalms 121 and 130, Deuteronomy 33:27a, John 10:27-29, and Romans 6:3-9. After one or several of these texts are read, the service is concluded with a prayer that like *Commendation of the Dying* uses the baptismal name of the deceased. The liturgy ends with the Lord's Prayer and a blessing for the family and loved ones. Many congregations use this service right before the start of the funeral. So as this brief liturgy is ended, the family and pastor will then gather at the front of the church to begin the funeral liturgy. The continuity that is found in ordering the liturgies in this way helps to bridge the time which has passed from death to funeral.

Once again, the church reminds those who are grieving that they are not alone. The theme of comfort and hope throughout both of these brief liturgies build to the message of the funeral liturgy itself. The intimacies of both liturgies offer a place of peace where emotion can be present and acknowledged. These services also prepare those who are grieving with what is about to happen in the funeral liturgy itself. The core support system of those who are grieving can be recognized and affirmed; reminding those gathered that they do not face a difficult time by themselves.

The ministry that is offered in these two brief liturgies, as well as the funeral liturgy, does not stop after the funeral. There are places within the Sunday mass to once again name the deceased and pray for them as they rest in the care of God. This

can be found in the Intercessory Prayers, which often include a petition for the saints whom have died in the faith. Another opportunity to name the deceased can be found in the proper preface of the *Great Thanksgiving.* Pastors may use these opportunities as a way of showing the continual ministry of the church. It is especially appropriate to use these opportunities when All Saints Sunday/Day is celebrated with Mass. Additionally, churches may light candles, chime bells, or offer other ways of remembering those who have died since the last All Saints Sunday/Day.

St. Paul says in Romans 6 "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."[82] At a funeral, the saving acts of God are proclaimed. Through his death on the cross, Jesus has defeated death and conquered the grave. The gift of the Holy Spirit upon the church has continued to carry this message since the first Pentecost Day.[83]

Since 1962 Westberg's work has been a foremost resource in the awareness of the grief process. His book has become a timeless classic, a source of authority on grief, and an "easily digestible book".[84] According to his daughters, Westberg's message of "the relationship between the Spirit and health"[85] influenced the career paths of his children. His book has brought about awareness of the Spirit's work in the church, specifically with regards to the funeral liturgy and the care of those who grieve. Through *Good Grief*, Westberg continues to speak to the struggle which everyone

82. Romans 6:23

83. The Pentecost/Coming of the Holy Spirit is found in Acts 2

84. Westberg 62

85. Westberg 62

experiences at some point. The church is indebted to his vision but perhaps more so to the work of the Spirit in his life. For it is the same Spirit who guided him that continues to guide the church to honor the deceased and hope for eternal life that comes from God through his Son, Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

As this project began its development it was realized that input from pastors within the church would be necessary to see if such a project was indeed needed and/or wanted. As previously stated in chapter 1, there is not a resource which links Westberg's book with the funeral liturgy. There is a wide variety of books available on the topic of grief, and the church has many liturgical and historical resources related to funerals. The lack of a resource linking the two creates a void that is necessary. All of this was taken into account as this project developed. It is known that the ELCA, the LCMS, the LCMC, and the NALC all use slightly different funeral liturgies due to the different hymnbooks that each denomination has adopted. However, the current funeral liturgies used by all four denominations have roots in the *LBW*, which was compiled by the LCMS and the predecessors of the ELCA, LCMC, and NALC. Therefore, it was deemed important to question pastors from all four branches of Lutheranism via survey for the research aspect of this project. Those surveyed also represented a wide range of experience in order to discern a fingerprint of past, current, and routine practices of pastoral care and ministry.

Taken into account with the survey was the fact that there is not a single hymnbook and related resources used by the majority of Lutheran denominations. This was a known downside before the project began. One of the strengths of the *LBW* was that it was pan-Lutheran in its planning, publication, and use. While there are still many churches in the ELCA, NALC, LCMC and even LCMS that use the *LBW*, it is not the current

resource used by all. Hence this project focused on the funeral liturgy in the *LBW* (mirrored closely in the *ELW*) as that helps narrow the direction and alleviates some confusion in applying Westberg to the funeral liturgy. An unintentional outcome is that the project could become a template for relating Westberg to the funeral liturgy of other traditions and denominations. Many of the resources used for this project could potentially be used as a part of that template.

As the results from the completed surveys were tabulated[1], several data points of interest developed. Of particular interest was the background information that was obtained. The majority of the respondents (80%) attended Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, SC. Pastors who responded also attended Concordia Theological Seminary (Springfield, IL), Concordia Theological Seminary (St. Louis, IL), Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (Charlotte, NC), and Gettysburg Theological Seminary (Gettysburg, PA). The earliest graduation year among the respondents was 1966, and the latest was 2015. This wide range in graduation years, alongside a diverse seminary education, provided a multi-generational look at pastoral experience and practice, particularly how pastors support their parishioners during times of grief.

An unexpected data point received from those surveyed is based on the graduation year. By looking at the graduation year and comparing that with the publication year of hymnbooks and resources, it is apparent that many of the more experienced pastors have gone through numerous hymnbook changes. The *LBW* was printed in 1978, the *ELW* in 2006 and *LSB* in 2006. The pastors who were already

1. Tabulated results are included in *Appendix B*

serving in congregations when a new hymnbook and related resources were printed have seen firsthand the changes which have come with the new material. These changes may have been within the style of language used, variations in the liturgy and/or the instructional rubrics, theologically based, or seen in the order of the service. The respondents who have lived and worked through hymnbook changes differs from the pastor who graduated in 2015, as that particular pastor has only used a single hymnbook and its related resources in their seminary education and pastoral ministry.

Looking at the background information above, one might deduce that the majority of those surveyed followed Everett's recommendation to use Westberg's book based on the seminary they attended. However, only 56% of those surveyed were familiar with Westberg. Of the 56%, only 2/3rd of them admitted to using Westberg's resource with their parishioners. Some of the respondents said they use additional resources, such as Kenneth Haugk's 4-volume *Journeying through Grief*. Others commented that they utilize small group grief care and individual counseling. One respondent said "we keep a copy in the church library" in reference to Westberg's book. The 44% who were not familiar with Westberg's resource also indicated that counseling, visits, phone calls, and small groups were part of their ministry to those who suffer grief. One respondent commented "basically use the psalms" as their preferred method for supporting their parishioners suffering grief. What this data shows is that there is no single way to do pastoral care when it comes to helping parishioners cope with grief. Each congregation is different, as is each pastor. All the respondents attended seminary but not all with the same teachers or resources. This strengthened the notion that a

project such as this might be needed. While this project is not striving to be the de facto way, it hopefully can become a way that is helpful for pastors, rostered leaders, and the laity.

An additional data point obtained from the first few questions of the survey concerns the respondents who have recently graduated from seminary. They are heavily represented in the 44% that had not heard of Westberg. There was no discernible data on why this is, other than Everett retired years ago, and those newest to ordained ministry did not take his class. The same can be said for those who attended LTSS prior to Everett teaching Pastoral Care. It is unknown if his predecessor included Westberg's *Good Grief* in the syllabus and recommended material.

In regard to the percentage of respondents who had not heard of Westberg an additional question could have been asked on this survey. This question would be about the use of technology in regard to grief care. There is a trend in society to communicate in ways other than face-to-face or even with each other at all. This communication happens through text messages, emails, and even self-checkout lines at stores. Could it be that pastoral care has also changed due to technology? Several of the respondents mentioned small group format for grief counseling. What if technology is a part of this in some way? Westberg's book is available in several formats besides hardcover and softcover print. These formats include Amazon Kindle, audiobook, and digital. This is also true of many more grief resources. Diving into this topic could potentially open the proverbial Pandora's Box, or may show hardly any data at all. Regardless, additional

questioning would be needed in order to find a more concrete answer and to develop this thought further.

Those who were surveyed were also asked about their use of the additional rites which can be used at the time of death or shortly thereafter. This includes *Comforting the Bereaved*, *Commendation of the Dying*, inserting the names of the deceased into the appropriate places of the Eucharistic Rite, as well as recognizing the deceased on All Saints Sunday/Day. Respondents were allowed space for comments to explain or to offer additional information on their responses. The following gives a breakdown of these statistics:

Use of *Comforting the Bereaved*:	88%
Use of *Commendation of the Dying*:	92%
Naming the deceased on All Saints Sunday/Day:	100%
Naming the deceased in the Eucharistic Rite:	4%
Naming the deceased in the Prayers of Intercession:	8%

As shown, naming the deceased on All Saints Sunday/Day occurs in all four branches of Lutheranism that were surveyed and is a multi-generational practice. It was the only response on the survey that received 100% agreement. From the percentages it is also noted that the use of *Comforting the Bereaved* and *Commendation of the Dying* is also widely used. While the majority does use them, not everyone does. One of the respondents who answered "no" on using those two brief rites commented that they felt the rites were "impersonal." Another commented that they "just don't use it, not sure why." Comments of affirmation such as "absolutely!" and "the one in LBW" were

also among the answers given by respondents. The latter of the two comments was affirmation that this project should mainly focus on the funeral liturgy which is a part of the *LBW* and of which the *ELW* closely mirrors.

Use of these related rites is also what led to inclusion of Roman Catholic resources in the project. Lutheranism as a whole has its roots in Catholicism, and even to this day the two denominations share many commonalities, especially in liturgical rites. Perhaps one day the polity and policy of the church will allow for more dialogue on the places where they do not agree, as they both seek to serve the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church that they both confess.

The survey built toward the purpose of this project which was to develop a resource which linked Westberg with the funeral liturgy. Two of the questions on the survey dealt with this specifically. The first, Question 6, asks "Have you ever related the funeral liturgy (*LBW* and *ELW*) to the 10 steps of grief as defined by Westberg?" 96% of those surveyed said no. However, 4% of the respondents said yes. This data point was the most surprising of the survey, as a premature "100% no" was expected. Additionally, there were a few comments among those who answered no. One comment said "No, but I'd like to." Another commented "no, but that is interesting." From this data it is clear that the idea has occurred but not by everyone. Furthermore, even though the idea has occurred no one has acted on it to produce such a resource.

Piggybacking on the previous question, those surveyed were then asked "Do you think a resource that does so will be helpful for pastors as well as laity?" This question received the widest range of responses of all the questions on the survey. 56% of those

surveyed said yes. 36% responded with "unsure" or "maybe". Only 8% did not think a resource which related Westberg's book to the funeral liturgy would be helpful or useful. They did not provide additional comments on their answers. However, two comments that were received stood out among the completed surveys. The first comment came from the unsure category. It was "I would have to see it". The second comment came from the yes category. It was also the longest comment. The respondent stated: "Very much so. It would also be especially helpful to have additional grief resources grounded in Lutheran theology and practice, specifically." This comment alongside the favorable percentage helped affirm the decision to move forward.

As the project started and continued to develop, it flowed with a sense of ease. The most surprising part of this whole project was how smoothly Westberg's 10 Stages of Grief fit within the various liturgical actions of the funeral rite. It seems as though each part of the funeral liturgy is somehow connected to one of the 10 stages. However, this connection does not go in order from Stage 1 to Stage 10. Instead, the stages appear in a random order. While not surprising, it is interesting. As individuals who grieve also do not necessarily grieve the 10 stages in order, this randomness strengthens the argument for uniting Westberg and the liturgy. Each individual grieves differently, and the liturgy certainly speaks to the individual, even while the congregation worships as a whole. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, who is present through the funeral liturgy with those who grieve and with those who come to worship and support those who grieve. We should not be surprised that God is present through the Holy Spirit for those whom He calls His. In baptism Christians are marked with the

cross of Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit. Jesus even promised to be with those who gathered in his name. One can find Jesus' promise to be present in 18th chapter of Matthew's account of the Gospel: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."[2]

Jesus also promised the sending of the Holy Spirit after his death and resurrection. This is found in the 14th chapter of John's account of the Gospel.

> [15] If you love me, you will keep my commandments. [16] And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. [17] This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. [18] "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. [19] In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.[3]

The funeral liturgy serves as a place where loved ones can grieve, worship, hear the Word of God proclaimed in a grace-filled way, be present alongside family, and receive strength from friends. All of this happens in the presence of God through the Holy Spirit. In his book Westberg makes it clear that faith is a big part of working through the 10 Stages of Grief. This is seen in his writing about Stage 10, *We struggle to affirm reality*.

> For a time we thought there was nothing about life that we could affirm. Now the dark clouds are beginning to break up, and occasionally, for brief moments, rays of sun come through. And hope, based on faith in a God whom our fathers and mothers have found to be dependable, once more becomes a part of our own outlook on life.[4]

---

2. Matthew 18:20

3. John 14:15-19

4. Westberg 59

A funeral is not the stopping place for the church and the care of those who grieve, as evidenced by the responses of the survey. Therefore, this project moved beyond the funeral liturgy into the related rites and services. In addition to the funeral liturgy, Westberg's 10 Stages of Grief was also applied to the related rites *Comforting the Bereaved* and *Commendation of the Dying*. The use of the liturgical additions (such as All Saints Sunday/Day liturgies) was also addressed. The survey showed that there are pastors who already use these related rites and services, so it was only natural to apply Westberg to them as well. Applying Westberg to these funeral-related rites also flowed smoothly and freely. Many of these services include similar prayers, scripture readings, and liturgical actions. The continuity of these services can be a comfort and strength for those who grieve. It also strengthens the bond between Westberg's work and the work of the church.

The work of the church, especially at a funeral, speaks of the connection that God has with his baptized children. This connection is found in the work of the Holy Spirit in this world and in the life of God's children. It is a connection that starts at baptism and continues through death, as St. Paul attests in Romans 8.

> There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. [2] For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. [3] For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, [4] so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. [5] For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. [6] To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. [7] For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law-- indeed it cannot, [8] and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. [9] But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit,

since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. [10] But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. [11] If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you. [12] So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- [13] for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. [14] For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.[5]

While helping people cope with grief is certainly a ministry of the church, it is also the ministry of the Christian. Westberg's *Good Grief* is not just for pastors or rostered leaders of the church. Instead it is for all people. This project was developed to be a help not just for pastors and leaders. Like Westberg, it is all encompassing, and therefore is also for laity. It is the liturgy, the work of the people, in which the Spirit shines in and through God's baptized children. If this project can indeed help someone see how the Spirit is active in the liturgy and in the life of someone working through grief, then it will be successful in its goal. It was Westberg's goal to help people cope with grief in a healthy way. The church shares in the same task. By the grace of God the work of both will continue for many generations to come.

The purpose of this thesis-project was to produce a resource that can be used by pastors and laity as the church continues its ministry to those who grieve, especially when confronted with the death of a loved one. Death is something that every individual will one day experience. Until that time, everyone has to also face death at the passing of a loved one. Death is universal and does not show partiality. Therefore, it is all the more important for the church to be prepared to help those who grieve. If

5. Romans 8:1-14

this thesis-project ends up being that help, then it has succeeded in its goal. As our Lord Jesus says in Matthew 5: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."[6] As Christians, both pastors and laity, strive to live out their calling from God on a daily basis, may they keep this verse in mind. Along with the church, may they strive to be that blessing until the day of Jesus' return in glory. Soli Deo Gloria. Amen.

6. Matthew 5:4

APPENDIX A

FUNERAL LITURGY AND GRIEF CARE SURVEY
In support of The Rev. Judson F Merrell's D.Min. Thesis-Project
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, NC

1. As the Pastoral Care professor at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, The Rev. Dr. Tony Everett recommended to all his students that they provide a copy of Granger Westberg's *Good Grief* to grieving families. As a pastor, a) are you familiar with this resource and b) do you currently follow Dr. Everett's recommendation?

2. Do you provide additional grief care books/pamphlets/resources? (If so, please list)

3. Do you use the church's funeral related liturgies with the families of those who have entered the church triumphant?

   A) Commendation of the Dying: Yes No
   B) Comforting the Bereaved: Yes No

4. If not, why not? (please specify which liturgy)

5. Do you utilize the opportunities to insert the names of the deceased into the additional liturgies of the church (such as The Great Thanksgiving and All Saints Day/Sunday liturgies)?

6. Have you ever related the funeral liturgy (LBW and ELW) to the 10 steps of grief as defined by Westberg?

7. Do you think a resource that does so will be helpful for pastors as well as laity?

8. In what other ways do you provide grief support to those who are grieving?

9. Seminary where you attended and graduation year:

APPENDIX B

Survey Tabulated Results

Surveys were distributed at two pastoral gatherings of Lutheran pastors. The first gathering was the Michael C. D. McDaniel Reformation Conference that was held at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary on Thursday, October 25, 2018. The second was at the Advent Retreat of the Society of the Holy Trinity-Carolinas Chapter, which met at the Catholic Conference Center in Hickory, NC on December 3rd and 4th, 2018. 26 completed surveys were returned. Lutheran traditions represented by the surveys are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC), the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS). The tabulated answers for each question are below.

Question 1:

A: are you familiar with Westberg's *Good Grief*? 14 (56%) responded yes
B: if "yes" to A, do you use it? 9 (66%) responded yes

Question 2:

Answers provided: "basically just use the psalms"; multiple responses said "Kenneth Haugk's *Journeying Through Grief*"; "Small group grief care"; "Individual Counseling"; many responded "don't use additional resources"

Question 3:

Use of *Commendation of the Dying*: 24 (92%) responded yes
Use of *Comforting the Bereaved*: 23 (88%) responded yes

Question 4:

The ones that responded no didn't give much information. One respondent did state that "it feels more impersonal."

Question 5:

Naming the deceased on All Saints Sunday/Day: 26 (100%) responded yes
Naming the deceased in the Eucharistic Rite: 1 (4%) responded yes
Naming the deceased in the Prayers of Intercession: 2 (8%) responded yes.

Question 6:

25 (96%) of the respondents said they had not related the stages of grief with the survey

Question 7:

Would a resource that related Westberg to the liturgy be helpful?
15 (56%) responded yes
2 (8%) responded no

9 (36%) responded “unsure” or “maybe”

Question 8:
Respondents answered that they provide visits, calls, prayer, grief counseling, and group grief care.

Question 9:
Respondents represented multiple seminaries:
21 (80%) graduated from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary
1 (4%) from Concordia Theological Seminary (St. Louis)
1 (4%) from Gettysburg Theological Seminary
1 (4%) from Concordia Theological Seminary (Springfield)
2 (8%) from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (Charlotte)

Graduation years (not all listed) varied from 1966 to 2015.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Herbert and Foley, Edward. *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001

Augustine. *Confessions*. New York: Barnes and Nobel Books, 2007

Benner, David G. *Care of Souls – Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998

Braaten, Carl E. *Essential Lutheranism – Theological Perspectives on Christian Faith and Doctrine*. Delhi: American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, 2012

Braaten, Carl E. and Jenson, Robert W., ed. *Christian Dogmatics Volume 2*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984

Brand, Eugene L. and Stauffer, S. Anita. *By Water and the Spirit: Pastor Guide*. Philadelphia: Parish Life Press, 1979

Brown, Raymond E. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. New York: Doubleday, 1997

Bushkofsky, Dennis L. and Satterlee, Craig A. *The Christian Life: Baptism and Life Passages, Using Evangelical Lutheran Worship Volume 2*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008

Christianson, Brent D. *The Good Grief Devotional: 52 Weeks toward Hope*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019

Cimino, Richard, ed. *Lutherans Today – American Lutheran Identity in the 21st Century*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003

Essbaum, Jill A. *The Good Grief Journal: A Journey Toward Healing*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019

Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW). Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004

Evangelical Lutheran Worship Leaders Desk Edition. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006

Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pastoral Care. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008

Everett, Tony. *Pastoral Care – WIGIAT.* Columbia, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, 2005

Ferguson, Everett. *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009

Gibson, Scott M. *Preaching for Special Services*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001

Gritsch, Eric W. *The Wit of Martin Luther*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006

Haemig, Mary Jane, ed. *The Annotated Luther Volume 4 – Pastoral Writings*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016

Haugk, Kenneth C. *Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart – How to Relate to Those Who are Suffering.* St. Louis: Stephen Ministries, 2004

Hendrix, Scott H., and Wengert, Timothy J. eds. *Philip Melanchthon – Then and Now (1497-1997)*. Columbia: Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, 1999

Hiestand, Gerald, and Wilson, Todd. *The Pastor Theologian – Resurrecting an Ancient Vision.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2015

Holy Communion and Related Rites. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004

Hong, Howard V. and Hong, Edna H., ed. *The Essential Kierkegaard*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000

International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), ed. *The Rites of the Catholic Church Volume 1 – Study Edition*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990

Jensen, Robert W. *Visible Words – The Interpretation and Practice of Christian Sacraments.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010

Keller, W. Phillip. *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2007

Kennedy, Pamela J. *Hymns of Faith and Inspiration.* Nashville: Ideals Publications, Inc., 1990

Kreeft, Peter J. *Catholic Christianity*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001

Kolb, Robert and Wengert, Timothy J., ed. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000

Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth and Kessler, David. *On Grief and Giving – Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss.* New York: Scribner, 2005

Lewis, C.S. *A Grief Observed*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1994

Long, Thomas G. *Accompany Them with Singing – The Christian Funeral*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009

Luther, Martin. Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. *Luther's Works Volume 26: Lectures on Galatians 1535 Chapter 1-4*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House 1963

———.*Luther's Works Volume 29: Lectures on Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House 1968

Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW). Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978

Lutheran Book of Worship Ministers Desk Edition. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978

Marty, Martin E. *Speaking of Trust – Conversing with Luther about the Sermon on the Mount.* Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003

McBride, Alfred. *How to Make Homilies Better, Briefer, and Bolder*. Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2007

Meeks, Wayne A. Gen. ed. *The HarperCollins Study Bible NSRV*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1993

Metzgar, Margaret. *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance: Help for the Losses in Life*. Appleton: Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, 1995

Oberman, Heiko A. *Luther – Man between God and the Devil*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989

Occasional Services. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982

Pfatteicher, Philip H. *Commentary on the Occasional Services*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983

———. *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990

———. *The Daily Prayer of the Church.* Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2005

Pfatteicher, Philip H. and Carlos R. Messerli. *Manual on the Liturgy: Lutheran Book of Worship*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing Company, 1979

Root, Michael, and Saarinen, Risto, eds. *Baptism and the Unity of the Church.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998

Saliers, Don E. *Worship As Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994

Senn, Frank C. *Introduction to Christian Liturgy*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012

Shapiro, Fred. *Quotes Uncovered: Death and Taxes*. http://freakonomics.com/2011/02/17/quotes-uncovered-death-and-taxes/ (Accessed 12/12/2018)

Smith, Margaret. *Facing Death Together: Parish Funerals*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998

Stjerna, Kirsi I., ed. *The Annotated Luther Volume 2– Word and Faith*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015

Swetland, Kenneth L. *Facing Messy Stuff in the Church – Case Studies for Pastors and Congregations.* Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2005

The Order of Christian Funerals. New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1989

Wengert, Timothy J. *A Formula for Parish Practice – Using the Formula of Concord in Congregations.* Grand Rapids: Willlliam B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006

———. *The Annotated Luther Volume 1 – The Roots of Reform*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015

Westberg, Granger E. *Good Grief*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1971

Yeago, David S. (2003). *The Apostolic Faith: A Catholic and Evangelical Introduction to Christian Theology*. Unpublished Manuscript.

VITA

For
The Rev. Judson Frick Merrell, STS

The Rev. Judson F. Merrell, STS currently resides in Lexington, SC. He was born to Franklin and Dawn Merrell in Salisbury, NC on April 18, 1980. Along with his brother, Franz, he grew up at Union Lutheran Church. He is a "dyed in the wool" Lutheran, having grown up at the same church as multiple generations of his family. Rev. Merrell attended UNC-Charlotte and graduated in 2003, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science. He was accepted to Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary and enrolled in the summer of 2003. After graduating in 2007 with a Master of Divinity degree, he accepted a call to be pastor at Springs of Grace Lutheran Church in Inman, SC, which he began on July 1, 2007. He was ordained a pastor in the ordained ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on July 22, 2007.

While serving as the pastor of Springs of Grace, Rev. Merrell became a subscriber of *The Rule* of the pan-Lutheran ministerium *Societas Trinitatis Sanctae* (STS). On December 2, 2012, Rev. Merrell was called to be the pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Gilbert, SC. He began on January 1, 2013, and continues to serve in that position today. While serving in this role he has been a regular contributor for the German website *Göettingen Predigten im Internet* (Sermons from Göettingen on the Internet), which is a global resource for lectionary-based sermons relating to the upcoming Sunday in the liturgical calendar. Most of the sermons posted are from Lutheran pastors and professors around the world.

In 2016, Rev. Merrell was accepted into the Doctor of Ministry program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He is presently a candidate for the Doctor of Ministry Degree with an expected date of graduation in May, 2020.

Rev. Merrell is married to Carrie Compton Merrell, and they are the parents of two daughters, Addison and Camryn, and one furry King Charles Cavalier named Westin.